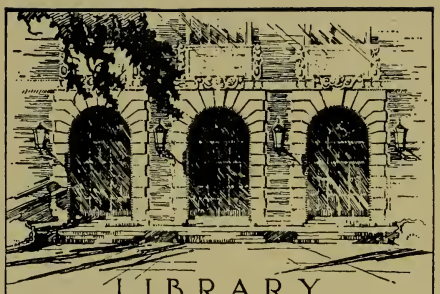

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IN ONE SMALL VOLUME, BOUND IN SILK, WITH COLOURED PLATES,

SIXTH EDITION, REVISED,

BY

THE EDITOR OF "THE FORGET ME NOT."

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

By all those token-flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well."—BYRON.

When Nature laughs out in all the triumph of spring, it may be said, without a metaphor, that in her thousand varieties of flowers, we see the sweetest of her smiles; that through them, we comprehend the exultation of her joys; and that by them she wafts her songs of thanksgiving to the heaven above her, which repays her tribute of gratitude with looks of love. Yes, flowers have their language. Theirs is an oratory that speaks in perfumed silence; and there is tenderness, and passion, and even the light-heartedness of mirth, in the variegated beauty of their vocabulary. To the poetical mind, they are not mute to each other; to the pious, they are not mute to the Creator; and our's shall be the office, in this little volume, to translate their pleasing language, and to show that no spoken word can approach to the delicacy of sentiment to be inferred from a flower seasonably offered; that the softest impressions may be thus conveyed without offence, and even profound grief alleviated, at a moment when the most tuneful voice would grate harshly on the ear, and when the stricken soul can be soothed only by unbroken silence.

In treating of so gay a subject, we will not make a parade of our learning, to tell our fair readers what fine things Pliny has said upon it; or, in the spirit of prosing, write a crabbed treatise upon the Egyptian hieroglyphics. We will even spare them a dissertation upon the floral Alphabet of the effeminate Chinese; they had, and have, their flowers and their feelings, their emblems and their ecstacies.—Let them enjoy them.—We shall do no more than rove through the European Garden, to cull its beauties, to arrange them into odoriferous significance, and to teach our refined and purifying science to those fair beings, the symbols of whose mortal beauty are but inadequately found in the most glorious flowers, and whose mental charms cannot be duly typified till we have reached those abodes where reigns everlasting spring, and where decay is unknown.

But little study will be requisite for the science which we teach. Nature has been before us. We must, however, premise two or three rules. When a flower is presented in its natural position, the sentiment is to be understood affirmatively; when reversed, negatively. For instance, a rose-bud, with its leaves and thorns, indicates *fear* with *hope;* but, if reversed, it must be construed as saying, "you may neither *fear* nor *hope*." Again, divest the same rose-bud of its thorns, and it permits the most sanguine hope; deprive it of its petals, and retain the thorns, and the worst fears may be entertained. The expression of every flower may be thus varied by varying its state or position, The marigold is emblematical of pain; place it on the head, and it signifies trouble of mind; on the heart, the pangs of love; on the bosom, the disgusts of *ennui*. The pronoun *I* is expressed by inclining the symbol to the right, and the pronoun *thou*, by inclining it to the left.

These are a few of the rudiments of our significant language. We call upon Friendship and Love to unite their discoveries with our's; for it is in the power only of these sweetest sentiments of our nature to bring to perfection what they have so beautifully invented, the mystical, yet pleasing, links of intelligence, that bind soul to soul, in the tender and quiet harmony of the one, or in the more impassioned felicity of the other.—*Preface to the Language of Flowers.*

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MAX WENTWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

"In the hero of this tale thou wilt find neither a majestic demi-god, nor a fascinating demon."

BULWER.

On a fine evening, early in summer, the setting rays of the sun were gleaming redly upon the western front of Wentworth Court, an ancient mansion, built after the stateliest manner of the Elizabethan style of architecture. The low grounds of the park and domains were already invested with a transparent purple mist; while, beyond the rich woods and sloping meadows, the sea spread its broad surface of glittering light. Regardless of the respectful admonitions

of an aged domestic as to the lateness of the hour, the master of the venerable edifice continued pacing to and fro upon the elevated terrace walk, until his attention was at length compelled by the more forcible expostulations of his companion, the apothecary from the neighbouring town, whose diminutive stature scarcely allowed of his keeping pace with the long and measured steps of his patron.

"There goes the evening gun, Sir Arthur!" he exclaimed, as the heavy report boomed along the waters. "Really, I cannot be answerable for the consequences of this imprudence! There is nothing so deleterious to the invalid as exposure to the evening dews, just at sunset, and after the heat of such a day as this has been."

"Well, Mr. Tatnall," said Sir Arthur, turning as he gained the extremity of the terrace, and retracing his steps towards the mansion; "I believe it will be prudent to follow your advice, and retreat within doors before a twinge of

rheumatism comes as a forerunner of all the evils prophesied by Ambrose's upbraiding countenance. Come, Nero," he continued, addressing the old mastiff which had been attending his side, with demeanour almost as dignified as his own,—" we will go in, old fellow, since it must be so; though much I could have wished to welcome my brother's daughters to my heart and home, while there was yet daylight enough remaining to display to them their own future abode, and the hereditary dwelling of their family."

" Upon my word, Sir Arthur, this is an occasion for congratulation both to the neighbourhood and yourself," remarked the polite Mr. Tatnall, in his most courtly phrase. " With two such fair and accomplished nurses as the Miss Wentworths at hand, you will be able to dispense equally with Ambrose's warnings and my prescriptions."

" I do, indeed, look forward to my nieces' arrival with pleasant anticipations of the change

to be thereby effected in my now forlorn abode," good-humouredly returned Sir Arthur, pausing as he entered the door which the old butler officiously held open. "It will gladden me to hear the sounds of youthful mirth and cheerfulness once more, within the halls which, of late, have served only as the desolate lair of a solitary old man. Nevertheless, for nurses, Mr. Tatnall, I will none of these girls! Kinder advisers, more careful attendants than I have already, no man needs; and since the death of their maternal aunt fitly consigns my brother Charles's orphans to my care, I will strive to provide more seemly entertainment for their youth and light hearts than watching by the couch of querulous age!"

The reply of Mr. Tatnall, which would probably have tended to deprecate epithets certainly inappropriate to the benevolent speaker, was prevented by the now audible sound of carriage wheels. Having caught sight of the approaching equipage, as it emerged from the shade of the neighbouring plantations, Sir Arthur hastened

through the hall to the principal entrance, where, standing beneath the proudly escutcheoned arms of his house, he received and folded, in a fatherly embrace, the two beautiful young women, who were henceforth to regard him as their nearest relative and protector.

Urged to its liveliest pace, the apothecary's pony was not long in conveying him to the gate of the Rectory House of Comerford, where, within the old-fashioned wainscotted drawing-room, had been assembled a large and sociable party, to which circumstances seemed to render Mr. Tatnall no unwelcome addition.

"Better late than never, Mr. Tatnall!" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert, the good-humoured and hospitable wife of the worthy rector. "I thought you would not fail us, and, therefore, desired Peter to keep your tea ready for you. We are all most anxious, I assure you, to hear how you left our good neighbour, Sir Arthur, and what your opinion is of the new comers;

for, of course, you waited to see the Miss Wentworths ?"

" Poor girls! a mournful lot is theirs," sighed a languishing little woman, very fancifully attired, addressing a tall, foolish-looking young man, who stood leaning against the wall near her. " It is cruel, in any case, to seek a stranger-home ; and then the gloom of that ancient fabric, so oppressive to the spirits, with the grey-haired domestics, and the aged uncle, probably morose as well as infirm! I used to pity poor Mr. Wentworth—how much more his helpless cousins. Man has external resources, but woman none !"—and the fair speaker closed, as she spoke, the bright blue eyes that seemed inclined to sparkle more than might have been in unison with the owner's sentimentalities.

" Really, Mrs. Mortimer," returned Mrs. Lambert, openly laughing, " I do not think you will find any one to agree with you in this commiseration of the Miss Wentworths. Since they were to lose their parents, poor things, in

their infancy, and latterly their aunt,—who, however, from all accounts, was not the kind of person to win much upon young people's affection,—I should like to know what more eligible home could possibly offer than that now open to them at Wentworth Court?"

"Upon my word, my dear madam," commenced Mr. Tatnall, who was busily engaged in the discussion of his tea and muffin, at the small table arranged for his use by the attentive Peter; "it strikes me that more than the young ladies in question will be gainers by their residence among us, for Sir Arthur talks of turning over a new leaf on the occasion; and, from what was mentioned to me confidentially of his intentions, I venture to predict a return of the good old days of open house-keeping at the Court, in honour of its new and charming inmates."

"So they are charming, then, Tatnall?" cried Doctor Lambert, from his whist-table. "That is precisely what I have been waiting

for an opportunity of enquiring. The ladies of the Wentworth family have been famed for their beauty from time immemorial; and I shall be happy to find that my friend's nieces do not, in any respect, fall short of their predecessors."

"It may be doubted whether the ladies present will all fully coincide in the doctor's wishes," remarked Mr. Mortimer, his antagonist at the whist-table, a middle-aged man of no great personal or intellectual endowments, and collector of the customs at the neighbouring port. "What say Miss Louisa and Miss Maria? Are they willing to yield the palm to these unknown damsels, or to confess that, knowing men's hearts to be slippery ware, they consider this couple of fresh divinities a most undesirable importation?"

"Nay, my dear sir, suppose that I, as well as my daughters, plead guilty to your accusation, though not from the motive you would mischievously ascribe to them," said his partner, Mrs. Severn, a fine-looking woman, remarkable

for the suavity of her voice and manner. "We *are* sorry to see Sir Arthur put the seal to his nephew's banishment, by adopting these new inmates in his place. But Mr. Wentworth was always so great a favourite with Mr. Severn and myself, and was looked upon so completely as a brother by my girls, that we can scarcely be expected to regard with complacency those who come among us avowedly as his supplanters."

"Let us hope for better things, my good Madam," said the Doctor, wishing to efface the impression evidently made by her speech upon his wife and several of the party. "There is no injustice done to Maximilian in the protection which Sir Arthur, as in duty bound, extends to his orphan nieces. I rejoice with Mr. Tatnall, at the benefit their society is likely to prove to their uncle, whose disposition is ill calculated for solitude; and see no reason for doubting their readiness to assist in healing the breach unhappily subsisting between Sir

Arthur and their cousin. There is no aid, we all know, so efficacious as a female's on such occasions. Meanwhile I intend no disservice to my friend Maximilian when I say that a little tribulation will probably do him no harm, and that his uncle's displeasure, though excessive, is not altogether unmerited."

"Take my word for it, all will go right at last," added Mrs. Lambert; "Max is a fine fellow, only too wild. He will have more than enough of that where he is, and we shall see him come home presently to take his proper place as his uncle's heir, and marry Miss Wentworth."

"Heavens, Mrs. Lambert!" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer, excited out of her usual affected languor. "I wonder you do not think there is something very shocking in cousins marrying, and you a clergyman's wife too!"

"Right, Matilda!" cried her husband. "I agree with you in thinking that the rare qualities of the Wentworths ought not to be kept

wholly in their own line. But we have as yet heard nothing of Tatnall's own opinion, founded on recent personal inspection of the goddesses just after their descent. Come, man! describe —describe—What are they like?"

"Very nice young ladies, indeed!" pronounced the Comerford Galen, rubbing his hands; "very nice young ladies, especially Miss Isabel, whom I confess I admired most, her appearance being so remarkably delicate and interesting."

"Dear, I hope she is not consumptive," said Mrs. Lambert. "It would be terrible for you to have to attend poor Lady Wentworth's case over again, Mr. Tatnall. But how did they look altogether?—dressy, stylish girls, or what? Isabel, you say, is pale and sickly, and by her age, she can hardly be more than a child; but her sister must have been out several years, though to be sure, in Yorkshire, and with that proud Mrs. Audley Stapleton, I dare say she has led but a dull life, excepting, perhaps, Lord Lieutenant's days, and Doncaster races, and

Scarborough, and Harrowgate. I remember poor Charles Wentworth's wedding four and twenty years ago, and he was very handsome, and so was their mother. It will be a pity if their daughters should not resemble them."

"The delicacy of Miss Isabel Wentworth's appearance has probably prejudiced Mr. Tatnall too strongly in her favour to allow of his being an impartial judge of her sister's merits;" said a gentleman who had not yet joined in the conversation, and who now leaving the station he had hitherto occupied, advanced towards the group of which the apothecary was the centre. "Miss Wentworth's manner certainly would denote her more accustomed to society than you, Mrs. Lambert, have imagined; but it is captivating enough, joined with her extraordinary beauty, to induce a hope in whoever has seen her that she may have escaped the failings usually attendant on the qualities most irresistibly calling forth our admiration and flattery."

"Well, Mr. Walsingham, I am glad to hear you can speak out sometimes!" facetiously exclaimed Mrs. Lambert, who seldom disguised any of her sentiments. "I don't recollect ever having heard you say as much for any young lady before; and I assure you, we all are doubly desirous to see the one who has been able to make such an impression."

Mr. Walsingham's reply, if he intended any, was prevented by Mr. Tatnall, who, getting alertly on his legs, and with a profound bow, hastened to explain away any untoward mistake. "Certainly, Sir, you have hit to a nicety just what I was going to observe respecting the elder Miss Wentworth, who, indeed, is no comparison a finer woman than her sister; although, as I was saying, looking sickly does make one take more interest in a person, even while spoiling, of course, all pretensions to beauty."

"Pardon me, Sir, if I again differ from you, in thinking Miss Isabel Wentworth very lovely.

Mrs. Lambert, you will allow me to wish you good evening ;—I have a long ride before me. Thank you, my horse is at the door :" and, resisting his hostess's multifarious proffers of curaçoa, milk punch, sandwiches and jellies, Mr. Walsingham withdrew.

Scarcely could Mrs. Lambert wait till the door closed behind him, before she broke forth with, " Well, really now, I am quite delighted! Only think of Mr. Walsingham at last!—and how pleasant it will be, to have a young bride at Marchwood! You need not laugh, Mr. Mortimer ; I see it all as plainly as possible. The other sister will do quite as well for Mr. Wentworth, you know, and Mr. Walsingham is such a very particular friend of Sir Arthur's, that there can be no doubt of his overlooking his want of wealth in favour of his high family, and strong Tory principles ; while even Lady Clarence Walsingham's pride cannot object to her son's repairing his embarrassments, by marrying a Wentworth."

"But you have forgotten, my dear Mrs. Lambert, in your very rapid conclusions, that Miss Wentworth, although Sir Arthur's niece, will not, we hope, be his heiress, while Mr. Wentworth lives; and that such a match as you are anticipating would, therefore, be a most imprudent one on both sides;" said Mrs. Severn, with scarcely her usual placidity. "Mr. Walsingham, I own, was never a favourite of mine, and his circumstances are so deeply involved, as to render him but an indifferent *parti* for any young lady, even of the most moderate expectations."

"This Miss Wentworth promises to be a most distressing female—she already possesses my unmitigated aversion!" remarked the tall, foolish looking young man, as he reluctantly quitted his position against the wall, in obedience to a sign from Mrs. Severn, on her carriage being announced. "If Walsingham be in earnest, I pity him!—an animated woman always makes me shudder. The delicious repose—the oriental

langour essential to my idea of true feminine loveliness, is wholly incompatible with the perpetual restlessness and fatiguing mobility of affected intellectuality!"

"Ah, we shall hear a different story after you have seen these young ladies, Mr. Augustus!" said Mrs. Lambert, shaking hands with him, as he left the room to follow his mother, whom Dr. Lambert was conducting through the hall. "Well, Mrs. Mortimer," she continued, "I mean to go tomorrow morning to pay my respects at the Court, and there will be a place in the carriage for you, if you like, since the Doctor, of course, will ride his pony; and I will tell Robert to drive round by the quay, and take you up."

This neighbourly offer was accepted with due acknowledgment, and the general separation of the party now taking place, its members were soon proceeding towards their various localities within the borough of Comerford.

CHAPTER II.

"I had brought sorrow on his grey hairs down,
And cast the darkness of my branded name,
(For so he deemed it) on the clear renown,
My own ancestral heritage of fame."

HEMANS.

"AND this is Wentworth Court!" said Melicent Wentworth, as she stood gazing from the terrace where, on the preceding evening, Sir Arthur had so impatiently awaited the arrival of his nieces; "this is the home which you once described to me so vividly, Mr. Walsingham, and for which Isabel and I have so often longed to exchange our uninteresting Yorkshire residence. All that you told us of its beauties, fell short of the glowing brilliancy of this landscape, —the bright green woods, bold rocks, and spark-

ling ocean, so different to the monotonous scenery to which we have been accustomed!"

Mr. Walsingham looked with admiration at the beautiful and intelligent countenance of his companion. "I do not wonder at your feelings," he replied; "Wentworth Court, with its antique splendours, has been an object of veneration to me from boyhood. To-day, however, it has assumed a far more cheerful aspect than I have lately seen it wear. The solitary life led for the last two years by Sir Arthur, has seemed as uncongenial to these scenes, as I believe it to be to his kind and social disposition; and hall, and bower, serving-men and lord, appear alike to smile in welcome of those whose presence has at once dispelled their gloom."

"Sir Arthur does already seem fond of Isabel," said Melicent, glancing affectionately while she spoke towards the spot where her young sister was standing beside their venerable relative. "It was more for her, gentle and timid as she is, than for myself, that I feared the

chances awaiting us in our untried home. We had heard my uncle called proud and stately; and you cannot imagine, Mr. Walsingham, what we felt last night, on finding ourselves received and welcomed by him with such paternal kindness."

"Thank Heaven, they are indeed worthy of the name they bear," said Sir Arthur, in his turn addressing Walsingham, whilst the sisters were caressing his shaggy favourite Nero. "They are all that I had imagined Charles's daughters. Melicent so frank and noble-looking, with the high-forehead, and waving chesnut tresses, which have generally distinguished the females of our family; and Isabel lifting towards me eyes that seem stolen from the portrait of her ancestor, Sir Bevil. We will take them to the picture gallery, Mr. Walsingham, that they may behold the semblances of their own hereditary loveliness. It is a good sign, believe me, that Nero has already become fond of them, for the noble animal would not attach himself

to any whose natures were not lofty and generous as his own."

With visibly increased dignity and solemnity, Sir Arthur threw open a pair of folding doors, and formally ushered his nieces into a long gallery, where, from the walls on either hand, row above row of mailed warriors, statesmen in long robe and ermine, and goodly dames in wimple and farthingale, looked down upon the youthful scions of their race. "Here," he said, "here, at least, there is no degeneracy; and I may be as justly proud of my living nieces as ever was our house of the beauties for which it has been famed. Here, too, may a likeness be found for many of the features which I trace in you both. That gallant knight," continued Sir Arthur, pointing to a portrait, in whose swarthy lineaments fancy alone could have discovered a likeness to the youthful Isabel, "Sir Bevil Wentworth, lost his life in the cause which his house had ever espoused. Like a true Wentworth, he drew his sword in defence of his

monarch and of the royal prerogative, and against those licentious usurpations of the people, of which he would have refused to credit that one of his name should ever become the advocate. He was taken prisoner at the battle of Lansdown, and hanged in revenge for their discomfiture, by the rascally Parliamentarians. His widow, Dame Cicely, of the loyal and honourable house of Stawell, when summoned before the rebel commissioners on a charge of concealing royalist stores, rang such a peal of spirited contumely in their ears, that Fairfax is said to have declined taking possession of her house, though known not to be of strength to hold out long, declaring that he dreaded interference with the Lady Wentworth more than any encounter of the war, and the rebel army accordingly left Wentworth Court untouched."

"Her daughter Mabel," continued the good baronet, passing on to the picture of a very beautiful female, "though of a more gentle temperament than her mother, still partook so far

of the family spirit of loyalty, that although the suitors for her hand were numerous, she vowed never to bestow herself in marriage, until she should see the king restored to his rights; and that blessed event being over long delayed, the fair Lady Mabel retained, to her death, the name of the house of which she is justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments."

The next portrait before which Sir Arthur paused, was that of Sir Richard Wentworth, the son of the doughty cavalier, and his termagant helpmate. "He, too, worthily served his monarch," went on Sir Arthur, "though rather in the council than the field. In return for the 10,000 crowns furnished by him to his sovereign, while in exile, does the royal portrait, presented by Charles himself after his restoration, now grace the with-drawing-room."

"We have forgotten everything, but these dear girls, this morning," said Sir Arthur to Mr. Walsingham, after the whole of the pictures had been commented on, and his mind became

capable of turning to less engrossing occupations. "Let us now leave them to recover from their fatigues of yesterday and to-day, while I acquaint you with several fresh demands from my tenants, for building ground, on what we recollect to have been a short time since the most unproductive part of the Marchwood property. Were all modern improvements likely to be as beneficial to my friends as those which are now so greatly increasing your revenues, my good neighbour, I think even I should soon become a convert to their expediency."

The withdrawal of Sir Arthur and Mr. Walsingham to the library, was not immediately followed by that of his nieces, who were interested in taking a longer survey than his presence had permitted, of the admirable portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds, of the late Lady Wentworth, and Sir Arthur himself. "Has there not been a picture removed from this place?" Isabel enquired, pointing to a vacant space next to

these. Old Ambrose, who had been left in attendance on them, shook his head sorrowfully as he replied, "It is well, my dear young lady, that you asked that question of me, and not of my master, for, ever since Mr. Wentworth so grievously offended him, Sir Arthur cannot endure to be in any way reminded of his nephew. His picture, therefore, is gone from its old place; his favourite horses have been sent away from the park, and we are all forbidden even to mention the dear young gentleman's name."

It was impossible that the Miss Wentworths should not have marvelled at this extraordinary display of resentment, in one who had appeared to them everything that was kind and indulgent; and, in Isabel's imagination, agreeable visions of romantic interest seemed to connect themselves with their new residence. "Mr. Wentworth must surely have given my uncle great reason for such serious displeasure," she said to the old servant; "it appears, nevertheless, that you regret his absence?"

"Not more than everybody about the place, young ladies. There was not a soul in the neighbourhood that was not fond of Master Maximilian, though he never could be kept out of scrapes, and we had no sooner got him free of one than he fell into another. This last, however, was the worst of all; and then came that terrible going to Spain, which Sir Arthur declares he never will forgive; and though my master is so free and kind-hearted, he can be hard enough when he thinks right. He has never looked cheerful, though, till to-day, since that sad morning when Master Maximilian left us; and to be sure it was a pity for him to go away from those who were all ready to serve him, to where they say he is not wanted, and can do no good worth speaking of."

How long the lamentations of Ambrose might have lasted, or whether they would have thrown any greater light upon the destiny of the unfortunate Mr. Wentworth, cannot be told; as the arrival of several morning visitors now obliged

his auditors to hasten to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Lambert, and others of the neighbourhood, were waiting to welcome them into Devonshire. Leaving them to entertain their guests according to the best of their ability, we shall accompany Mr. Walsingham on his return to his mother, and their noble but cheerless residence.

CHAPTER III.

Falstaff. "You have here a goodly dwelling, and a rich."

Shallow. "Barren, barren, barren; beggars all; beggars all, Sir John;—marry, good air."

SECOND PART OF HENRY IV.

AT a period not very remote from the present, the lands of Marchwood, belonging to the Walsingham family, had extended almost as far as the boundary of the Wentworth Court estate; whence, indeed, they were only divided by a narrow slip of wild common, running down between the neighbouring domains to the sea shore. The extravagance of the late Mr. Walsingham, however, had combined with various untoward family misfortunes, to alienate a great part of his estates, and to cause the remainder

to descend to his son so heavily encumbered, that a long minority, and the careful administration of his mother, Lady Clarence Walsingham, had only partially removed his embarrassments; and, although nominally in possession of what was still one of the largest properties in the county, the present owner of Marchwood was with difficulty enabled to keep up the appearance required by his station. His disposition was not one whereon these circumstances could fail in producing an effect; and the very excess of his pride induced Mr. Walsingham to assume a more accessible demeanour than might otherwise have been natural to him. "The world already marks me as a distressed man; and with it, pride and poverty have long been held as synonymous terms," he would reply to his mother's reproachful wonder at actions she considered as derogatory. "Let me at least have the satisfaction of treading a less beaten path. Your son's estimation of his own claims may not be the less lofty, because he descends

not to pretensions that might, by any possibility, be disallowed."

Mr. Walsingham was, therefore, an active, and, in many respects, a popular man in his neighbourhood. The powers of his mind enforced respect, and gave him weight and authority on public occasions; while the care he took to veil any consciousness he might entertain of his own superiority, prevented the usual ill will on the part of those he outshone. It was observable, however, that Mr. Walsingham's sphere of popularity descended no farther than to the rank immediately below his own. To his tenants he was a liberal landlord, and to his domestics not an unkind master; yet there was no warmth of attachment in the eulogiums they could not always refuse to bestow, for the effect of his benefactions was neutralised by the reserve and indifference of manner which characterised his intercourse with them. His intimate friends of his own degree were few in number; but these were warmly attached to him, even while perhaps

aware of the defects inherent in his character. Of these friends Sir Arthur Wentworth was one of the oldest; though, from the natural indulgence of his disposition, neither the most clear-sighted nor the most rigid of mentors. During the years when Lady Clarence had acted as her son's guardian, Sir Arthur had proved to her a most valuable assistant; and the lively interest he took in his friend's affairs caused him to learn with great satisfaction the favourable aspect they had recently assumed. Long standing annuities and leases had, one after another, dropped in; some after the regular course of years, others unexpectedly; and accidental circumstances had given a sudden increase of value to lands hitherto yielding only scanty returns, but which now promised, at no distant period, to add several thousands per annum to his revenues.

Mr. Walsingham rode home, after his conference with Sir Arthur, with spirits more elated than was usual to him, and scarcely in accordance

with his boasted indifference to the gifts of fortune. His pace became more leisurely, and his glance less animated, it is true, when, emerging from the thick shade of the Wentworth woods, the road entered upon that wide tract of country once possessed by his ancestors, and which, having now fallen into the hands of speculators, bore in its petty enclosures and unpicturesque buildings, a melancholy witness to the presence of the wide-reaching genius of modern improvement. Presently, however, these irritating objects were left behind: in front and on either hand, all of hill and dale then basking in the broad sunshine was his own; and though prudence had of late compelled the adoption of many ungenial measures, whereby profit had been more consulted than taste, yet hope now looked confidently forward to a date not remote, when all hateful restrictions might be removed, and the Lord of Marchwood surround himself with as jealously kept and aristocratic a demesne as any of his predecessors. "And then," ima-

gination whispered, as, at his horse's slowest pace, he began to ascend the last rise in the ill-kept approach, across which were lying the cattle which had assumed the place of the former herds of antlered deer—"when these old halls are no longer desolate, and the hand of wealth has imparted comfort and beauty to these neglected scenes, then will not the removal of the fetters that have till now clung round my spirit effect a wholesome change in a nature which has become, in truth, almost too cynical for enjoyment? May not the consciousness of power and success, by its softening influence, dispose me at length to try the experiment which others have so often proved to be precarious, of seeking happiness in the creation of an idol to be invested with the garniture of one's boyish day-dreams?"

Arousing from his reverie, Walsingham smiled at the length to which he had carried his anticipations; yet there was a slight flush on his brow, and a somewhat accelerated motion of the pulse, that told of yet further imaginings, and of

a prophetic intimation that such an idol might quickly have to him more than a visionary existence.

Marchwood House, the family mansion of the Walsinghams, was situated upon a rising ground that formed the centre of a chain of downs, extending on either hand as far as the sea; and enclosing a semicircular fall of ground, where, screened from the north and east, rich lawns of verdure, thickly interspersed with magnificent clumps of forest trees, shelved down toward the cliff-bound coast, which, lowest immediately in front of the mansion, allowed the prospect thence, at low water, to include the waves breaking upon the beach. To a spectator, however, whose advance had been by the ordinary approach, the same pursued at present by Mr. Walsingham, the first view of the house offered a bleak and dreary appearance, from the scarcity of trees in its immediate vicinity, and the evident deficiency in most of the customary adjuncts of so noble a residence. The building

itself, of spacious dimensions and heavy architecture, was of a kind requiring the lighter accompaniments alluded to as a relief to its bare and massive proportions. A limited space round the edifice was fenced off from the incursions of the cattle allowed to feed in the park; and passing through the iron gate, and avoiding the principal entrance, now seldom used, Mr. Walsingham, having left his horse with a groom, went round to the side where a less stately portal gave ingress from the garden to his mother's apartments. Here everything wore a far more cheerful aspect; the southern front of the house was that which commanded a view of the sea, and of the intervening woodland declivity, and the windows opened upon well-arranged and carefully-tended beds of fragrant shrubs and flowers; while all within and without displayed marks of the liberal attention which Mr. Walsingham delighted in lavishing on everything connected with his mother. The room wherein he now found Lady Clarence, was

elegantly and even luxuriously fitted up, in a manner corresponding with habits and tastes refined as those of its occupant. Still a very beautiful woman, and scarcely beyond the prime of life, Lady Clarence bore in countenance a striking resemblance to her son, although the features which in Walsingham were moulded into an expression of peculiar firmness and decision, were in her softened by the pliability of character which had formerly caused her to bend to the extravagant humour of her husband, though aware that it was unauthorised by the circumstances of the family, and which still suffered her judgment to be constantly overruled by the inflexibility of her son,—towards the promotion of whose welfare all her thoughts were directed.

"I did not expect you so soon, Walsingham," she said, smiling, as her son threw himself on the low chair he had drawn close beside her's. "I am glad, however, that you are come, as there are several letters for you, which may be

of importance in the business which has been engaging you with Sir Arthur. I have also received one from my brother, with the contents of which I should wish you to be acquainted."

Mr. Walsingham opened his letters, and, after a brief perusal, gave them into his mother's hands. They did, as she had supposed, relate to the projected improvements on his estates, and he now also communicated to her the good baronet's favourable opinion.

"Your uncle's sentiments fully agree with Sir Arthur's," said Lady Clarence, when her son had finished his detail. "You will see this by his congratulatory expressions, and his hope that you will ere long cease to be restrained by prudential motives from entering upon that arena of public life, for which he considers your talents to be so eminently calculated."

"My uncle is infinitely obliging," replied Walsingham, taking the marquis's letter from his mother, and carelessly surveying its contents. "I am in no haste, however, to arrive

at the period he so kindly prognosticates. In the event of my fortunes undergoing this prosperous change, there is ample employment before me in the reconstruction and upholding our dilapidated estates, without removing from the sphere which I am convinced opens the greatest chance of happiness, and which I am not ambitious enough to exchange for the turmoils and intrigues of political life."

"This from you, Walsingham!" exclaimed his mother, with great surprise. "From you who have always appeared to thirst so eagerly for the public distinctions you are now pleased to rate so lightly! How long have you thought it the height of felicity to fill the place of your own bailiff or steward, with the occasional recreation of a Comerford réunion, such as that of last evening."

Walsingham laughed without any show of embarrassment as he resumed the perusal of his uncle's letter. "Why should I not have in view the species of happiness so forcibly recom-

mended by his lordship in the latter part of his weighty epistle, where he is pleased to eulogise me as one capable of gaining the affections of any well-educated young woman; and entitled by birth, connexions, and family importance, to form the most eligible of alliances!"

"Do not ridicule your uncle's affectionate anxiety for your welfare, Walsingham," said Lady Clarence; "and, believe me, my fondest wishes would be gratified by your marriage, were you indeed to form such a connexion as would effectually promote your felicity. But of this, I own, I despair. I should not wish my son's choice to be otherwise than fastidious;—birth equal to his own he would of course demand, and with fortune his circumstances unhappily will not allow him to dispense. Where are all these advantages to be found united?" Lady Clarence paused, but her son remaining silent, she continued; "My brother's expressions plainly indicate to me his wishes. Either of his daughters he would, doubtless, gladly

match with the heir of the Walsinghams, already so nearly allied with him in blood. Their portions will be thirty thousand pounds each. Gertrude is amiable, and Anne accomplished."

"Alas, that they should not more nearly approach the ideal perfection you were lately delineating!" said Walsingham, amused at his mother's visible despair of finding any more flattering epithets for the daughters of the Marquis of Amisfield. "Let me, at any rate, disclaim all hope of meeting with such a phœnix as you have imagined, willing to bestow herself upon me, and then enquire, whether you have any further commands for me, before my return to Wentworth Court to dinner."

"Only one word, Walsingham," said his mother, rising and following him with an anxious countenance to the window, whither he had retreated. "Do not be angry, if I am needlessly solicitous concerning one, whose strong mind has ever kept him free from boyish susceptibilities. You have this morning, however,

uttered sentiments new to me, as coming from you, and wherein I cannot but trace some new influence at work. I have not forgotten the impression you appeared to receive upon the occasion of your first meeting with Miss Wentworth, and which her attractions certainly seemed to justify. Should Sir Arthur's resentment last, or his nephew, as is very probable, never return to England, she will be a richly portioned heiress; but far more than the uncertainty of these prospects, I am inclined to regard as objections, those very fascinations which I acknowledge her to possess. I know your disposition too well, Walsingham, not to be aware, that jealousy is one of its characteristics. You would expect much from the woman you made your wife, and hers would be no easy task. Manners like Miss Wentworth's would create constant dissension between you. Do not, I entreat you, be tempted into committing yourself rashly."

Mr. Walsingham had turned angrily away, and as his mother concluded, he coldly rejoin-

ed: "Your cautions, madam, are most unnecessary, and such as neither my own nature, nor the manners of Miss Wentworth, appear to me in the smallest degree to warrant. At all events, nothing can at present be less called for. I have scarcely seen that young lady since her arrival in the country;—and will not fail to bear your warnings in mind," he added, in a gentle tone, perceiving the tears his preceding harshness had brought into his mother's eyes. "Forgive me, madam, and doubt not that your son will endeavour in his choice, to depart as little as possible from the living standard presented by the mother of whom he is so justly proud."

Lady Clarence repaid her son's affectionate embrace with a smile; but her countenance resumed its anxious expression, as she watched him set forth, on what she continued to deem his dangerous visit to Wentworth Court.

CHAPTER IV.

" Certe, ils etaient bien là, les deux beaux jeunes hommes !" HERNANI.

UPON the sea coast, in the opposite direction to Marchwood, and about a mile and a half distant from Wentworth Court, the small town or village of Comerford lies at the head of an estuary, into which flows one of the picturesque rivers of Devonshire. A fresh breeze ruffled the blue waters of the haven,—numerous fishing boats shot across the little bay, or were moored in front of their owners' huts, scattered along the beach; and the white sails of one larger vessel, a beautiful schooner, were rapidly furled, and secured to the tall and slender masts, while a boat

putting off from her side, was rowed swiftly into shore, at the moment when Melicent and Isabel, a fortnight after their arrival at the Court, emerging from the shade of the Wentworth woods, found themselves in front of Dr. Lambert's residence, the parsonage house of Comerford. As they opened the gate before the comfortable red brick building, covered with its luxuriant vine, and overhung by large old elms, the sisters were warmly greeted by its hospitable mistress, from the bay window wherein she sat, busied with her carpet work, and watching the approach of visitors, or passengers along the neighbouring high road.

The refreshments considered by Mrs. Lambert necessary for her guests after their walk, had made their appearance, and she had herself repaired to her husband's study, to acquaint him with the arrival of the Miss Wentworths, when, on her return, her attention was caught by the sight of two gentlemen in yachting costume, advancing through the entrance-gate, towards the house. The Doctor, with more than usual ala-

crity, hurried out to meet the strangers, one of whom, a handsome young man, of two or three and twenty, seeing Mrs. Lambert at the window, came forward, and was quickly recognised and welcomed by her in the warmest manner.

"Well, Lord Lymington, this is a pleasant surprise!" she exclaimed, shaking hands with him. "And yet it is what I have been expecting, too; for I always said that you were not one to forget your old friends, and that we should have you at Comerford again, one of these days."

"My yacht has been lying in Falmouth harbour for the winter, and I came down last week into that neighbourhood to my brother-in-law's, Mr. Tresham, whom you must allow me to introduce to you, Mrs. Lambert," said Lord Lymington, as his companion entered with the Doctor. "We are at present on a cruize for the benefit of my sister's health, and I would not, on any account, have missed this opportunity of seeing you and my good tutor here."

"You will find the neighbourhood has rather gained than lost in attraction, lately, Frank.—Here are two young ladies, with whom you ought to be acquainted," said Dr. Lambert, as he presented his former pupil to the Miss Wentworths. The favourable impression already made on them, by his unaffected and lively manner, was by no means lessened by the warmth of his enquiries after Sir Arthur, to whom he expressed himself indebted for extraordinary kindness, during the period when he had resided with his tutor, Dr. Lambert, at Comerford. His first visit on his return, he said, had been due to the Parsonage; but the next would certainly be paid to Wentworth Court.

"After luncheon, Frank, we will escort the young ladies home," said the Doctor. "Mrs. Lambert will, I know, insist upon you and your friends taking up your abode with us for some days to come, and we will leave her to make her arrangements during our walk. Had you visit-

ed us a short time ago, you would have found the Court strangely altered for the worse. It has undergone as great a renovation, under the auspices of its present fair inmates, as the worthy Baronet himself."

Mr. Tresham, though still more distinguished in exterior than his brother-in-law, had certainly failed hitherto to acquire an equal station in the good graces of his new acquaintance; yet, though silent since his entrance, he had certainly not remained indifferent to attractions so unexpectedly met with in the Rectory parlour; and when forced to desist from the prolonged survey he was bestowing upon the beautiful sisters, there was no deficiency of ease or grace in the manner of his reply to Mrs. Lambert's pressing corroboration of her husband's invitation. No excuses were proof against her good-humoured pertinacity, and Lord Lymington being eager to arrange a water party, on board his schooner, for the following morning, which might include the Miss Wentworths, it

was agreed, that Mr. and Mrs. Tresham, himself, and their friend Mr. Stanley, should dine and sleep at the Parsonage that night at least. Mrs. Lambert's promise to visit the Falcon in return, was readily given, and when Melicent and Isabel prepared to take leave, Lord Lymington, reminding Dr. Lambert of his proposal, rose to accompany them back to Wentworth Court, determined to prefer his request for the morrow, to the good-natured Sir Arthur.

The return of the sisters was found to be awaited not only by their uncle, but also by Mr. Walsingham, whose visits to the Court had latterly become longer and more frequent than ever. His previous acquaintance with the Miss Wentworths, although limited by the formal and stately mode of intercourse practised in the neighbourhood where it had occurred, now gave him the privilege of being received as less of a stranger than the other members of their present society. His own high qualities, and Sir Arthur's marked regard, were recom-

mendations not likely to be overlooked by Melicent and Isabel; while the admiration with which the former had already inspired him, increased in the almost daily association to which he was admitted; as, keenly susceptible on all points connected with female grace and refinement, he felt the influence of her winning and gentle manners, and remarked the marvellous change effected in the late sombre and disconsolate household. It was not until this morning, when the graces which had captivated him were in his presence exerted for the welcome and entertainment of her uncle's other guests, that Walsingham's dormant prejudices began to revive, and the doubt to insinuate itself whether such a character as Melicent's were likely ever to accord satisfactorily with his own.

A surmise so new and unwelcome, was not to be lightly indulged; and inwardly determining that the blame of the annoyance he was experiencing, lay not with Melicent, but with the persecution she was enduring from the boyish

levity of Lord Lymington, and the forward presumption of Mr. Tresham, Walsingham forced himself to take part in the general conversation, and willingly engaged to join in the expedition proposed for the next day.

"I can hardly believe," he said to Tresham, as both gentlemen stood conversing with Miss Wentworth, "that you have induced Mrs. Tresham to become your associate in a cruize like this. Her health I should have imagined too delicate to admit of her enjoying an amusement so fatiguing and uncertain."

"Oh! Lymington has far more influence over my wife than I can boast," returned Mr. Tresham, coolly. "After his success in once luring her on board, I am not surprised, indeed, at her preferring the utmost horrors of her situation there, to the exertion requisite for making her escape. My equanimity does not stand so well the test of a three days' confinement on board a schooner."

Lord Lymington and Dr. Lambert had met

with as little difficulty as they had anticipated in obtaining Sir Arthur's sanction for a scheme which promised pleasure to his nieces; but Isabel, delighted as she was with the prospect of finding herself on board the beautiful vessel she had so much admired, still could not help exclaiming, after the departure of the doctor and his companions,

"Half my pleasure is lost owing to that disagreeable Mr. Tresham. He seemed to think we should go entirely to please him! Lord Lymington did appear willing to make himself agreeable both here and at the Parsonage; while his friend almost all the time could do nothing but look at us in that annoying manner."

"That poor Mrs. Tresham! No wonder she is ill! I imagine she must be very unhappy. With what carelessness her husband spoke of her this morning," said Isabel, when, in the evening, Walsingham, who had been detained by Sir Arthur to dinner, joined Melicent and

herself among the parterres and fountains of the gardens of Wentworth Court.

"Do not waste your sympathy where it is probably uncalled for," answered Walsingham. "I doubt Mrs. Tresham's possessing any very acute sensibilities to be wounded, even if she has intellect to comprehend her husband's contemptuous indifference. However, this does not excuse Tresham; who, having married her to extricate himself from the embarrassments wherein his extravagance had involved his princely property, ought, as a gentleman, to treat her with respect and civility."

"If he married for money, I can believe him capable of anything!" Isabel indignantly exclaimed. "You have made me pity her and dislike him a thousand times more than ever."

Mr. Walsingham smiled as he turned towards Melicent. "Much as I admire your sister's enthusiasm, and little as I am disposed to defend Mr. Tresham's conduct," he said, "I confess that I consider far more inexcusable the man

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who marries without a due regard to the prudential considerations she appears to hold but lightly."

"It is evident that you do not suspect me of partaking in Isabel's romance," answered Melicent, laughing. "You disapprove then of the ancient minstrel's advice to 'marry neither for riches or land, but only for love?'"

"I would as soon adopt the creed of the modern writers who attempt to persuade us that there is greater refinement of feeling in the cottage than the palace; and that love in its purity is to be found in the breasts of labourers and dairymaids. A sentiment so etherial exists only aloof from the grosser atmosphere of the world, and is debased the moment it is brought in contact with the meaner cares of existence. No love worthy of the name could long withstand the harassing annoyances inseparable from a narrow income—no man of any delicacy of feeling could see the woman he loved deprived of the slightest accustomed luxury, without fan-

cying every shade upon her brow conveyed a reproach to himself."

"Surely you carry the feeling too far," said Melicent; "though agreeing with you in a strong disinclination for actual, downright poverty, yet I think a woman may sometimes consent cheerfully to give up Sèvres china and Brussels lace, when actuated by a very sincere attachment."

"Perhaps so; but I own I would rather not try. The sacrifice, indeed, is one that many of your sex have had generosity enough to make; but I should scarcely expect from them the strength of mind that would preserve from after regret. No, believe me, the less either party renounces for the other the better for their happiness."

The sisters were silent; and Walsingham, with a slight degree of embarrassment, went on, addressing himself, however, to Isabel.

"I do not say that I could be content myself to follow Mr. Tresham's example, because my habits are domestic, and would induce me to

attach a greater importance to the taste and disposition of my wife. Yet I also am an embarrassed man; and though, unlike him, I suffer from the extravagance of others, it may be long before my exertions shall have cleared off the embarrassments on my property. But the same principle which would forbid my reducing the woman I loved to an inferior station, would render me reluctant, I own, to address one greatly accustomed to society and adulation. How could I expect from the flattered beauty, the spoiled coquette, the entire devotion which would alone satisfy me? There are sacrifices which I believe it would cost your sex far more to make than those of wealth and splendour; and I should more readily imagine a woman enriching with her fortune a ruined spendthrift, or abandoning home and comfort for a selfish and unworthy lover, than that one who had tasted to the full the pleasures of gratified vanity could ever be brought contentedly to resign them."

"I cannot anticipate any probability of your being led to choose so unwisely," said Melicent. "Vanity and coquetry are failings not likely to escape Mr. Walsingham's detection; and they are surely not so universal among us but that some may be found whose retired habits and manners may secure them from misconstruction or distrust."

"Say rather anxiety," he warmly replied; "from which I affirm no love on our part can be free; since, while woman is by nature prone to be easily impressed and misled, who can tell how long the purest and most guileless of beings shall withstand the evil influences at work around her? Who can depend upon being able to maintain his ground against the encroachments of friends—society—kindred—all the various claimants upon her favour and attention! I would as soon descend to secure my wife's constancy by precautions unworthy of myself and her, as share with parent or child, animate or

inanimate object, the affection which I should regard as exclusively my due!"

"There would, indeed, be danger of such incessant anxiety defeating its own ends," replied Melicent. "Neither love nor happiness can, in my opinion, exist without perfect confidence!"

"Another word for indifference! And yet you are right—there is danger that such vigilance would be felt as odious and irksome—that such devotion would be repaid by ingratitude; and the wisest and safest plan, I admit, is to school down the feelings to an ordinary level, and substitute the rational expectations and eligibilities of the *marriage de raison ou de convenance,* for the chimerical felicity which cannot even be grasped at without subjecting you to the evils of blighted affections and love betrayed."

The silence that followed was of some duration; for, whatever might be Melicent's opinion of his sentiments, she had no desire to combat

them seriously. Her gravity might, perhaps, be attributed by her companion to the interest he had excited; at all events, when he spoke again, it was to change the conversation to one of lighter tone; and till they regained the house, he exerted himself with tolerable success in dispelling the restraint which had involuntarily become evident in her manner.

CHAPTER V.

Oh for a soft and gentle wind!
I heard a fair one cry:
But give to me the rolling seas,
And white waves beating high!

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

"THIS really is very kind in you!" said Mr. Tresham's pretty but indolent-looking wife, as she exerted herself to make room upon the cushioned couch beneath the awning for Melicent and Isabel, after their introduction to her on board the Falcon the following morning. "I cannot imagine how Frank could expect you to come, where I am afraid you will all be so very uncomfortable."

"You see your influence, my Lord—I am

once more your victim!" said Mrs. Severn to Lymington, who was assisting her out of the boat which had brought her daughters and herself alongside the Falcon. "Constitutionally averse to this sort of thing, as I must confess myself to be, I cannot tell how my girls have acquired their passionate fondness for aquatic excursions;—I believe my foolish Louisa thinks no one can be drowned in the Falcon! Mr. Severn, mild as he usually is, quite scolded the poor child this morning for her raptures."

"Mr. Severn was not to be persuaded to join us?" inquired Lymington. "I trust he is not more of an invalid than usual to-day."

"Oh no!" replied his affectionate wife, with a tender smile, as she gracefully mounted the deck; "we always leave him at Oaklands on these occasions; sitting by himself in his own favourite little room, with the blinds nearly closed, and nothing to disturb him, he is so very comfortable! Few Englishmen enjoy the *dolce far niente* like Mr. Severn."

Her daughters had by this time followed her on deck; and, in a few moments, the Falcon, with all sails set to catch the fresh morning breeze, was dashing rapidly through the waters, as if sharing the impatience of some of her passengers at the delay occasioned by the elaborate toilettes of Mrs. Severn and her daughters. Even Mr. Tresham, who had been leaning against the mast, in, apparently, no very complacent humour, awaiting the moment of departure, roused himself to comment satirically with his friend Mr. Stanley on the torrent of eloquence wherewith Mrs. Severn was now overwhelming his wife, who scarcely gave herself the trouble of even listening to her details of having encountered Lord Lymington on the preceding day, and being consequently compelled to accompany her daughters:—he was so great a favourite, and no circumstances ever induced her to resign the important duties of chaperonage to another.

"I declare I am quite sorry for that poor Mr.

Severn," said Mrs. Lambert, in a confidential tone, to Melicent; "to be dragged out or left at home, just as it suits his wife's convenience, without consulting him in the least, cannot be very agreeable. Last summer, when she had her reasons for making constant water parties and pic-nics, it was always "Mr. Severn is so fond of the water!" "Mr. Severn infinitely prefers these gipsying parties on account of their freedom from any kind of *gène!*" And now, because he is not wanted, the poor little man is left at home with that conceited son of his, whom it certainly is a comfort to have out of the way."

"Ah, by the bye," said Tresham, "where is the admirable Augustus? In the five minutes' colloquy I held yesterday with Mrs. Severn, the opinion of Augustus was five times quoted. Why are we denied the countenance of her paragon?"

"Oh, because his mother does not want him, and knows he would be only in the way here.

With all her nonsensical partiality, I fancy she finds him plague enough sometimes. The only thing remarkable I could ever see about him, was his conceit, and the Doctor has no patience with him, for being such a puppy."

"Do not you feel perfectly *ecrasée* by the weight of those very coarse straw bonnets the Miss Wentworths have got on?" whispered Miss Severn, to her friend Mrs. Mortimer, whose "lovely white crape," had already been the theme of her admiration. "Only think, Papa wanted us to put on our old bonnets to-day, when we were coming out in dear delightful Lord Lymington's yacht,—with such a love of a man, too, as that stylish Mr. Tresham! Quite a pet, isn't he, love?—only so shockingly impudent that I cannot bear to look at him;" and her mother's watchful eyes being for once averted, Miss Louisa fixed hers so admiringly upon Tresham, that he could not refuse her in return, a portion of the attention she so evidently courted.

Isabel, meanwhile, with delight that precluded any wish for other amusement, gazed upon the changeful variety of scene before her. The bright foaming waves were breaking against the bold rocks and headlands of the Devonshire coast; while at intervals, along the narrow creeks and inlets, or where the beautiful rivers entered the sea, glimpses might be obtained of green vallies and recesses, wherein a thousand beauties seemed to lurk. To the glowing expressions of admiration which, unable to repress them, Isabel addressed to Miss Maria Severn, next to whom she was seated, a not very intelligent smile, and a faint sigh, were the only answers she received: nor did better success attend the further attempts at conversation, which compassion for the evident want of health and spirits of her companion, induced Isabel to make. Lord Lymington was not unobservant of her fruitless labours, and breaking off his conversation with Dr. Lambert, he abruptly said,

"Where are my old acquaintances the sketch-

books, Miss Maria? I never remember their being forgotten before."

"Indeed we did not forget them," replied Miss Maria, roused to unusual animation. "Mamma told us not to bring them; she said they could be of no use to-day."

"Indeed! I am surprised at that," observed Dr. Lambert; "I should have imagined Mrs. Severn sufficiently well acquainted with the grounds of Mount Edgecumbe, to know that you are likely to meet with several remarkably fine points of view there to-day."

"There sits the delinquent, my lord," interposed Mrs. Severn, her attention caught by Lymington's question;—"your old friend Louisa, who is dying, I know, to acquire some of your valuable information concerning those nautical minutiæ about which young ladies are in general so terribly ignorant. Louisa is at heart a sailor—'No sketching to-day, mamma,' she said, 'I have too much to learn—I can think of

nothing but yachting, when I am on board the Falcon!"

"I am delighted to hear it," exclaimed Lymington. "*I* am tired to death of the whole thing, and mean to have done with yachting after this season; but my friend Stanley is just taking it up—came into an immense property last year, and mad after these ruinous toys. Miss Severn's enthusiasm on his favourite subject will enchant him. 'Show me a girl accomplished, and fond of yachting, and I'll marry her immediately,' is his constant expression!"

While Stanley, unprepared for resistance, fell a victim to his friend's stratagem, and Lymington, satisfied with its success, resumed his conversation with the Doctor, Isabel, profiting by the hint he had given, again addressed her silent companion on the subject of sketching. It was evidently a favourite one—the young lady certainly sighed in an unaccountable manner, when she confessed her dislike of trees, and laid a mysterious emphasis on the last word of the sen-

tence, when she owned, that she did not sketch much *now;* but still she answered Isabel's questions without reluctance, and was even wrought to such a pitch of animation, as to volunteer the remark, that Wentworth Court was very pretty.

Isabel willingly assented, but observed, that as a sketch, it would be very difficult for any one who disliked trees, since its woods formed its chief ornament.

"Do you think so?" replied Miss Maria, with a sigh still deeper than usual. "It looks very pretty without the trees. I drew it so once, and I was going to work it in German wools for a screen, only Mamma thought it would be too exciting!"

"Do tell me," enquired Mrs. Tresham, stopping Lord Lymington, as he was passing near her, "what can Mrs. Severn be saying to Stanley all this time? How bored he looks!"

"He has little chance of speedy extrication from the toils spread for him," remarked Walsingham,

looking in the direction pointed out, while Lymington laughingly retreated to his former station. "Your friend's looks, Mrs. Tresham, certainly bespeak him ungrateful at present, for the pains Mrs. Severn is taking to ingratiate herself with him. But he cannot always remain insensible to her complimentary allusions to the house of Derby; her flattering preference of Peveril of the Peak, and the pointed quotation I have just overheard of the last words of Marmion."

"How very ridiculous!—and Stanley hates that kind of thing so much," said Mrs. Tresham, sinking back again into the posture of luxurious indolence, from which all the charms of the beautiful panorama before them had been insufficient to arouse her.

"It would be quite time enough to see the coast on their return in the cool of the evening;" she said, as she resigned herself for the present to the tranquil gratification of listening to the lively conversation of the group that had formed round her couch—amused by Mrs. Lambert's

good humoured *commérage*, and not insensible to the grace and intellect of Melicent Wentworth. Her own manners, when divested in some degree of their apathetic indifference, were gentle and pleasing, and imposed no restraint upon her new acquaintance. Mr. Walsingham, although disappointed in the failure of his attempts to engage Melicent's exclusive attention, seemed yet resolved to exert himself to the utmost to contend with Tresham for the palm of agreeability; and, when the vessel rounded the last headland, and the magnificent bay of Plymouth, its shore crowned by the wooded cliffs of Mount Edgecumbe, came in sight, the general feeling seemed expressed by Mrs. Lambert's exclamation, that really this had been the pleasantest water-party she ever remembered.

"Have not we begun the day delightfully, Mr. Stanley?" enquired Miss Severn, as she took her place in the boat that was to convey the party to the shore. "That dear Falcon, is she not a love? If she does but take us back again

as quickly as we came, we shall have time for a pleasant evening altogether, at Oaklands or the Parsonage, and Maria and I can sing for Lord Lymington some of his favourite duetts."

"I trust our chance of hearing you does not depend upon the Falcon's speed against the wind equalling that with which she was borne hither by a favouring breeze," answered Lymington. "It would be useless, too, to hurry over our visit to Mount Edgecumbe, as we must wait till the turn of the tide, which will not be till sunset, before we can leave the shore."

"Oh, that will be quite exquisite!" exclaimed Miss Severn, with undiminished satisfaction. "The moon will look so enchanting, and singing sounds so beautifully on the water. Are you fond of music, Mr. Stanley?"

"Very," replied that gentleman, in an absent manner; then adding more earnestly, "Pray, Lymington, have you considered where we are to dine, if we are kept out so long?"

"Dine?" replied Lymington; "oh there are

plenty of places to dine at—there is a pretty little inn, within a stone's throw of the Park gates, which would be the very spot, and we could order everything to be ready for us after our ramble through the grounds."

"It seems a dangerous project," said Tresham; "let us not decide rashly on trusting so important a consideration to the narrow minded *chef-de-cuisne* of a place garlanded with roses and honeysuckles! Less of hazard would surely be incurred at the Royal Hotel."

"Consider the distance for the ladies, my dear sir," interposed Dr. Lambert. "I assure you we shall be very well taken care of here. Sea air and exercise are capital provocatives to appetite; and before our walk is ended, I fancy none of us will be fastidious enough to object to the simple, but excellent fare, I can venture to promise you."

"Ah, Mr. Tresham, you are sadly unarcadian in your ideas, I am afraid;" observed Mrs. Severn, archly. "Let us trust that before our

sylvan excursion is ended, roses and woodbine may have refined your taste!"

Having given the necessary orders at the little inn, where the sight of a cool parlour tempted Mrs. Tresham and Mrs. Lambert to remain, instead of encountering the heat and fatigue of a walk through the park, the rest of the party were soon apparently engrossed in admiration of its splendid scenery, the fine terrace surrounding the mansion, and the inimitable beauty and variety of the woodland walks and drives. The mortification wherewith Mrs. Severn had observed the successful manœuvres of Lord Lymington, to obtain a station by the side of Isabel, subsided upon her seeing that Mr. Stanley had abandoned his first resolution of remaining behind, and that he continued, though with no great alacrity, to accompany them. Not so Walsingham. His demeanour that morning, joined with the conversation of the preceding day, had tended to enlighten Melicent as to the motives which, rather than regard for Sir

Arthur, might have occasioned his late frequent visits to Wentworth Court. Instead of the frankness which was its usual characteristic, her manner assumed towards him a shade of reserve which, together with her ready acceptance of Mr. Tresham's attentions, deeply irritated Walsingham. His abrupt secession from the party attracted little notice. Mr. Tresham's powers of conversation were, when he chose it, of the first order, and he was at present fully disposed to exert them for the entertainment of Miss Wentworth, as, following their guide, they pursued the beautiful walk overhanging the sea, sheltered by lofty trees, but affording delightful views of the harbour through their branches.

CHAPTER VI.

" No stir in the air, no stir in the sea ;
The ship was still as she might be.
Her sails from heaven received no motion ;
Her keel was steady in the ocean."

THE INCHCAPE BELL.

" WERE you not acquainted with my cousin, Mr. Wentworth, when you formerly resided in Devonshire, Lord Lymington ?" inquired Isabel, somewhat suddenly, availing herself of the first pause in their conversation, as, considerably in advance of the others, they pursued the picturesque path alluded to in the last chapter.

" I scarcely dared to mention my friend to you," replied Lymington ; " since the doctor tells me that Max is still in dire disgrace ; and

at Wentworth Court, where, formerly, he was perfectly worshipped, I understand I am not even to pronounce his name. Wild and thoughtless he may have been; but to merit such deep resentment from the uncle for whom I know Max would have sacrificed everything—it is utterly impossible!"

"Melicent and I have never seen our cousin, and we are ignorant of the causes of his banishment," said Isabel. "Old Ambrose, indeed, intimated that he was believed to be in Spain, but told us no more; and what it is Sir Arthur's pleasure to conceal, we could not wish to learn from a domestic. If Mr. Wentworth be all that I imagine him, my benevolent uncle's estrangement from the last of our family is the more extraordinary. No venial error, surely, could have caused such a result; yet what you who know my cousin say of him, added to the little I have been able to learn, makes me feel certain that he is not one to be suspected of any unpardonable offences."

"You do not then wholly condemn him? I was certain you would prove his friend;—and yet, there are those who believe your coming to be of ill omen to the nephew whose place in Sir Arthur's affection will now be speedily filled up."

"I am glad you do not suspect us of wishing to supplant Mr. Wentworth. My first wish, my most earnest desire, ever since I heard of this unnatural estrangement, has been to discover the means of reconciling those so nearly related, and once so fondly attached;—to restore Sir Arthur's heir to his rightful station, and to impart that cheerfulness to my uncle's old age, which might well desert him when he thought of one who ought to be the support of his family, and the honour of his house, wasting the best years of his life in wandering far from the home which must eventually be his own; but from whence every relic of its future master has now been banished. Had you seen the mournful way in which Ambrose pointed to the vacant

space where my cousin's picture once hung, surrounded by his ancestors, you would not wonder at the deep interest we take in our absent and unknown relative."

"His picture gone from the gallery? That looks ill, certainly; but let us trust to have the original restored to us soon," said Lymington, struck with the lively sympathy manifested by his blushing and beautiful companion. "Now that I know I shall have coadjutors instead of opponents in Miss Wentworth and yourself, I am determined not to rest while Maximilian remains away from a home which, with so much attraction recently added to it, is not one whence any man would patiently bear to be excluded for youthful follies and eccentricities, probably repented of long since, and forgotten by all but Sir Arthur. No time shall be lost on my part; and when I renew our long interrupted correspondence, may I tell your cousin that he has warm and true friends in your sister and yourself, joined to those already willing to

espouse the cause of one who, let his faults be what they may, will prove, as you anticipate, and I firmly believe, an honour to the name of Wentworth?"

Isabel blushingly assented to his proposition; and, gratified with the idea that her cousin would not believe Melicent and herself indifferent to his welfare, she would willingly have questioned Lord Lymington still farther respecting one who had now become an object of redoubled interest with her. The approach of Dr. Lambert, however, with a warning of the lateness of the hour, made them aware of the necessity of returning to the inn, where a hurried repast awaited them. The tremendous echoes had repeated again and again the reports of the evening guns from the shore, and from the vessels in the harbour, before the Falcon, with all sail set, was slowly gliding through the smooth waters on her homeward track.

Fatigued with the exertions of the day, the party on deck seemed disposed to manifest little

of the gaiety which had prevailed there in the morning. Mr. Walsingham had stationed himself next Melicent; and Tresham, thoroughly tired, apparently, of his companions and himself, lay stretched upon one of the benches, which he had previously rendered more commodious by arranging on it various cloaks and shawls. The breeze had almost entirely died away; and the sluggish motion of the vessel seemed to produce a deadening effect upon the spirits of the party. Lymington looked uneasy, and exchanged one or two significant observations with the sailor at the helm. Many a wistful glance was cast upon the still waters and the darkening horizon; and it was a general relief when the Miss Severns were reminded of their engagement, and sang several French and Italian duets to the accompaniment of a guitar, which they had quite accidentally brought with them.

"How now, Frank? Surely we make but little way!" suddenly exclaimed the Doctor,

aroused from his slumber by the conclusion of a song; and noticing, as he looked towards the shore, the slight change that had taken place in their position.

"Ours is a lost case, I take it, Doctor," said Tresham, coolly, "so far as regards the chance of regaining our last night's comfortable quarters at the Parsonage. The tide is running a race out by the headland yonder, and what wind there is, blows directly in our teeth."

"Surely, Frank, you cannot have exposed us to the risk of being kept out all night with so large a party on board!" exclaimed Mrs. Tresham, alarmed into some degree of energy. "There must be a breeze to spring up, or a tide to turn, or something to happen, which Tresham hopes to tease us by concealing."

Lord Lymington's answer, most reluctantly given, did but increase the dismay occasioned by Mr. Tresham's announcement. He could not perceive, however, he said, any reason why, even at the worst, the ladies should not be

able to make themselves very comfortable below, though of course they could not expect the accommodations of a frigate on board a schooner.

"Certainly not, my lord; and there is no doubt of the wisdom of making the best of things," remarked the good-natured Mrs. Lambert. "I have no doubt we shall all manage very well—though, to be sure," she added, turning to Melicent, "who would ever have thought of my being reduced to one of those strange little dormitories below! As for the doctor, my dear, you know he would be a perfect impossibility!"

In spite of Lord Lymington's efforts to restore the serenity of his passengers, the greater number remained silent and dispirited. To the effect of the close and heavy atmosphere, was added the unpleasant motion of the becalmed vessel; and Mrs. Severn, who had for some time been struggling to conceal her uncomfortable sensations, at length declared her dread of

going below, and entreated Lord Lymington to devise means of getting them safe on shore. Lymington had nothing to recommend except patience and hope; but when Mrs. Lambert, recollecting Mr. Tatnall's observations on the delicacy of Isabel's constitution, openly lamented the risk she would incur, and the uneasiness Sir Arthur was likely to suffer on his nieces' account, Mr. Walsingham interposed by inviting the whole party to Marchwood. He knew a part of the coast, at no great distance, where even at low water a boat might be taken close underneath the cliff, which was there practicable of ascent. A long discussion ensued. None of the ladies liked intruding upon Lady Clarence; while to Mrs. Lambert and Mrs. Treshani the difficulties of the enterprise were insurmountable, and the latter especially dreaded its fatigue too much to stand in need of the positive injunction to remain where she was, which her husband roused himself to utter. Mrs. Severn likewise had her fears and scruples, but both

vanished when the final arrangement that Dr. Lambert and Mr. Walsingham should escort to Marchwood herself and the Miss Wentworths, empowered her to leave her daughters, freed from all dangerous rivalry, under the care of Lord Lymington and Mr. Stanley.

With considerable exertion, and the assistance of the long oars or sweeps, the intervening headland was rounded, and the schooner hove to opposite Marchwood cove. The boat was then lowered for the reception of the adventurers, and in a few moments, Walsingham and his fair companions were standing beneath the cliff he had pointed out, where a scanty margin of shingly beach, and piles of rocky fragments, afforded space to wait the arrival of Dr. Lambert and Lord Lymington, who had insisted on lending his aid in the ascent. "I wish Mr. Tresham had stayed away!" exclaimed Isabel, on perceiving that he too was in the boat; "I am sure we should have managed much better without him!" Walsingham looked as

if he perfectly agreed with her; but farther remark was prevented by the gentlemen springing to their side, and the necessity of commencing their formidable task. Availing himself of the moment when Walsingham was unavoidably occupied in pacifying the real or affected terrors of Mrs. Severn, Tresham urged Melicent to make the first trial. Once engaged on the precarious track, it was scarcely possible to look back or take breath, until the desired summit having been safely attained, they were at length at leisure to survey the slower progress of their friends. Melicent, too, could now express her gratitude for the very efficacious assistance she had received, and the extraordinary trouble incurred by her companion. "It is I who ought to feel obliged to Walsingham's scheme," replied Tresham, smiling, "for affording me a good and sufficient cause for exertion, as well as the power of escaping, for a few moments, from those insufferable friends of Lymington's. Grant us your compassion, at least, Miss

Wentworth, for having to return to that becalmed vessel with such a prospect of entertainment for a rainy evening in the state cabin of a schooner."

"I really think the poor creatures there deserve most pity," said Lymington, who with Isabel had now joined them. "A storm is coming up from the west. Laura will be in despair, and perfectly helpless, and since the activity which has just enabled you to distance us all, proves you to be at last awake, I trust that you mean to enact an efficient part in soothing the terrors of Mrs. Mortimer and the fair Louisa."

"Heaven forbid that I should interfere with you, and forfeit the opportunity of proving to Miss Wentworth that her influence alone could have disturbed my slumbers!" answered Tresham. "No, I warn you that my efforts, if I make any, will be exclusively devoted to Mrs. Lambert herself."

No farther time could be allowed for con-

dolence and adieus, ere Tresham and Lymington sprang down the cliffs to return to the schooner, now scarcely visible through the gathering haze and darkness of the evening.

"I could not intrude my assistance where it was so evidently undesired," said Walsingham, in a low voice, as he drew near Melicent. "Yet I had trusted that you would allow me to be your guide in danger, as a compensation for the small share of your attention granted to me during the day, though Miss Wentworth must be aware what was my inducement to join a party of which she was a member."

While Melicent, displeased at the tone he had assumed, endeavoured by the coldness of her reply to prevent its continuance, Walsingham proceeded still more earnestly.

"There is much, doubtless, that is flattering in the undisguised admiration of such men as Mr. Tresham; but Miss Wentworth surely is above the common weakness of her sex. She is incapable, I am convinced, of deriving plea-

sure from the pain which may be inflicted upon those who, better than any idle man of the world, know and appreciate the value of the notice she has suffered to be so unreasonably monopolised."

"I have not the slightest wish to be considered superior to the ordinary failings of my sex, Mr. Walsingham," answered Melicent, coldly; "nor do I doubt that most women, contrary to your supposition, would willingly resign the pretensions of which you accuse us, the moment a deeper feeling were in question. On the present occasion, I have received too much amusement from Mr. Tresham's conversation not to be happy that I am not called upon, in any manner, to relinquish such agreeable society." As she concluded, Melicent, affecting to find some difficulty in pursuing their path through the faint twilight, accepted Dr. Lambert's arm; and Walsingham, deeply irritated, led them on for the rest of the way in nearly unbroken silence.

The rain, which had before only threatened, now pattered in large drops among the leaves of the shrubbery through which they were passing, and forced them to quicken their steps towards the house. A few words from her son made Lady Clarence acquainted with the claim upon her hospitality; and she hastened to bestow upon all a friendly greeting, and to place Melicent and Isabel at once at ease by the affectionate warmth of her manner towards them. After every precaution had been taken to prevent ill consequences from their exposure to the dampness of the night, and the immediate dispatch of a messenger to Wentworth Court, the party, with invigorated spirits, drew around the table which had been spread for their refreshment; and in the narrative of their past adventures, congratulations to each other on their present situation, and pity for the friends they had left so much less agreeably circumstanced, an hour passed rapidly away.

As the sisters afterwards followed Lady Cla-

rence to their apartments, the lightning more than once flashed through the high casements on the walls of the long galleries they traversed; and long after their kind hostess had retired, the sound of the heavy rain that was falling, occasioned anxious concern for the inevitable discomfort of their luckless companions of the day.

CHAPTER VII.

"Your lord does know my mind; I cannot love him." TWELFTH NIGHT.

A BRIGHT morning sun was shining on the woods and lawns which had been enveloped in gloomy fogs on the preceding evening, and the blue and sparkling waves of the Channel, no longer bound in glassy stillness, were breaking audibly upon the beach, when Melicent and Isabel descended to the breakfast-room, where Lady Clarence was awaiting her guests. Every thing without wore the most cheerful aspect of early morning; the birds were singing gaily in the branches, and the diamond raindrops hung

glittering from leaf and flower. No such favourable change had been wrought by daylight upon the interior of the mansion. With the exception of the wing appropriated to Lady Clarence, the greater part of the building was uninhabited; and the scantily furnished galleries and apartments through which the sisters had to pass on leaving their chambers, presented a forlorn and gloomy appearance.

"How rough the water is this morning, Dr. Lambert," said Melicent, as she took her place beside him at the breakfast-table. "What would we not last night have given for the wind that is now so freely cresting the waves with foam! I should like to know how our poor friends passed the night."

"Better than might have been expected, I am happy in being able to inform you, my dear Miss Wentworth," said Dr. Lambert. "From a messenger despatched early this morning by my thoughtful helpmate, I learn that owing to the gale which sprung up, the schooner was

able to make Comerford Haven, and land her passengers under much less time than had been calculated upon. Some degree of inconvenience, inevitable under the circumstances, appears to have accrued to the party; and Mrs. Mortimer and the Miss Severns are stated to have been considerable sufferers from illness and alarm. The knowledge that you young ladies were safe out of harm's way seems to have relieved my wife of her principal burthen of anxiety; and I shall hardly quarrel with the result of the expedition, so far as she is concerned, since it has induced, according to her own announcement, a firm resolution of abiding by dry land, and carefully eschewing all marine excursions for the future."

"How grateful my daughters will be to Lady Clarence and Mr. Walsingham for the hospitality which has preserved me from making what they would regard as so untoward a resolution!" observed Mrs. Severn. "They are already looking forward to our next continental trip with very pardonable anxiety. Mine is a more sober

time of life; and, fascinating as are Paris and Vienna, I owe it to myself to say, that after a winter spent in either of those cities, I have always been able to contemplate a return to the country where Mr. Severn must of necessity spend most of his time, with satisfaction, if not with pleasure!"

An invitation from Lady Clarence to visit her flower-garden after breakfast, was readily accepted by the whole party. The absence of any attempt to keep up the more distant part of the grounds made the extreme beauty and high cultivation of Lady Clarence's own domain more remarkable; and some recent improvements noticed by Dr. Lambert, a professed horticulturalist, called forth his particular encomiums. Mr. Walsingham disclaimed the merit of the whole. It belonged entirely to his mother. He knew nothing of flowers himself, and had no taste for a garden.

"You must not believe all this, Doctor," said Lady Clarence, smiling. "Mine might be in

part the head to plan, but his was the hand to execute—his the energy to vanquish every obstacle as soon as I expressed a wish. I have many causes, Doctor, to make me both fond and proud of my garden."

Isabel could not refrain from casting a reproachful glance at Melicent, and drawing nearer to Lady Clarence, as she saw her eyes glisten while she looked towards her son.

"I shall never be surprised at anything I hear in praise of Mr. Walsingham," said Mrs. Severn. "He has always appeared to me the *beau idéal* of what a young man ought to be. Ah, Lady Clarence, you and I are fortunate in our sons! Were I not afraid of being laughed at as a partial mother, I should say that, in my estimation, Mr. Walsingham ranked as quite another Augustus Severn!"

"Melicent, I hardly know you this morning! I never saw you ungracious before," was Isabel's remark, as the carriage turned from the gate at which she had witnessed the constrained and

distant leave-taking between Walsingham and her sister.

"My ungraciousness, as you call it, Isabel, has, at any rate, effected the purpose for which it was intended," replied Melicent. "Mr. Walsingham unquestionably perceives that the slight attentions with which he has honoured me, are likely to meet with little gratitude; and will, no doubt, speedily transfer them elsewhere."

"Then you do not like him?" said Isabel, in a tone of considerable surprise. "I wish I could imagine the sort of person likely to please you, Melicent. If Mr. Walsingham does not, I must really despair."

"I own that, in many respects, Mr. Walsingham does seem to merit approbation and esteem. There is an interest about him, too, when he is seen in his old mansion, not trying to conceal his honourable poverty, not wishing to appear different from what he is, that makes one regret the more the circumstances in which he has been placed. His disposition, perhaps, is one

whereon prosperity would have exercised a favourable influence. He might have become less selfish, less worldly, than the mortifying trials to which he has been exposed, have probably contributed to render him."

"Selfish! worldly!—how strangely you talk this morning, Melicent—how very unlike yourself! You who always see things through so favourable a medium, to pass so harsh a censure upon one whose faults, if he has them, deserve certainly a more merciful construction at your hands. To me, Mr. Walsingham's softened manner and gentle tone, when he vouchsafed this morning, for almost the first time, to bestow a little notice upon me—piqued, no doubt, by your evident avoidance—made him appear the most fascinating person I had ever met with."

"Poor Lord Lymington! Between Mr. Walsingham who is present, and Mr. Wentworth, who in absence possesses so many charms for your imagination, I fear he stands but little chance."

" Lord Lymington ! He is very good-humoured and. pleasant ; but then he is so young, and so extremely happy and uninteresting !"

" Thank Heaven, that delusion is at an end !" Walsingham mentally exclaimed, when returning to the house, after accompanying the Miss Wentworths to their carriage. " That I could continue so long in error is all that now appears unaccountable. Melicent Wentworth the woman—the wife—my imagination had created ; gentle, devoted, requiring only my love to constitute her happiness ! Mr. Tresham deserves my thanks. Had he not proved himself an adept in administering to her vanity and caprice, I might still have been endured as the means of procuring for the spoiled beauty her requisite daily allotment of adulation and excitement. And well would such folly as mine have deserved the punishment ! There was no danger of its extending further—no danger that Miss Wentworth would ever have dreamed of bestow-

ing her fair hand upon the presumptuous owner of these old walls and this impoverished domain! But there is no doubt that, had other amusement failed, I should have offered myself as fair game; and as it is, if I am ridiculous in my own eyes, it is agreeable to reflect on the light wherein I must stand in hers!"

CHAPTER VIII.

" Mieux voir croitre du chanvre où ma tour s'éleva,
Qu'une tâche ronger le vieux nom de Sylva !"
VICTOR HUGO. HERNANI.

THE uneasiness which the prolonged absence of his nieces had occasioned to Sir Arthur, was sufficiently manifested by the affectionate warmth of his reception of them on their return, and by the relief which he owned had been afforded to his mind by the arrival of the messenger from Marchwood. His interest in their proceedings soon drew from them most of the particulars of the various events of the preceding day; and, as they sat together in the evening,

Isabel, after singing to him his favourite songs, felt more than ever desirous of interceding for her cousin with one who appeared thus benevolent and considerate. Accordingly, when Sir Arthur began to speak of Lord Lymington, and of the period during which he had resided in that neighbourhood, summoning all her courage to her aid, she ventured to say,

"Lord Lymington made several enquiries, Sir, respecting Mr. Wentworth; of whom he said he was an old friend, and whose absence he seemed particularly to lament."

The visible agitation of Sir Arthur caused Isabel immediately to regret what she had said. Her uncle, however, having in some degree recovered his composure, replied as if willing to reassure her; "I do not blame you, my dear Isabel, for thus mentioning a subject which must necessarily have excited your surprise; especially as you cannot be aware of the pain and mortification to which a recurrence to it must expose me."

"Forgive me, my dearest uncle, for my presumption. However much I may wish your happiness to be increased by the restoration of Mr. Wentworth to your favour, I am so fully convinced that the cause must be great indeed which could render one so good and kind thus implacable, that, if such be your desire, I will promise never to offend by naming my cousin again."

Sir Arthur was for some time silent; and then with a degree of solemnity in his manner, and a slightly faltering tone, he thus addressed his nieces.

"So dearly do I love you both, and so anxiously do I wish that you should love and esteem me as a father, that I will reopen a scarcely closed wound, rather than be accused by you of undue severity. Your cousin's whole conduct, nevertheless, has been such as to leave little ground to suppose that he would even desire to be re-admitted to the house of his forefathers."

Sir Arthur paused, and Melicent hastened

to assure him that no explanation was required to convince them of his having been right in what he had done, or to insure affection and reverence from those who were so deeply indebted to him. Her uncle, however, was now of opinion that his nieces ought to be made acquainted with the cause of their cousin's disgrace; and nerving himself with difficulty to the task, he thus continued.

"During the childhood of Maximilian, many circumstances rendered it improbable that he would ever be the heir to our family honours. But death has been busy among us, and of all the fair and goodly supports that then promised to uphold the name of Wentworth, there now remain none, save an infirm old man, and one whom I grieve to be compelled to regard as an unworthy successor. As I have said, my youngest brother little thought that his son was likely to become the master of Wentworth Court; and this must form his poor excuse for the strange

course he adopted, and which I vainly endeavoured to prevent. Maximilian, then, while yet a boy, was sent to one of the most riotous of the German Universities; and there were sown those seeds of evil which, I fear, it is too late ever to hope to eradicate. Years past away, how laden with sadness to our hearts !— and the neglected boy remained the sole heir to my fortunes, the principal stay of my widowed and desolate heart. Impatient of his absence, I summoned him back to his country : but my feelings may be imagined when I beheld him in language, in costume, the most extravagant imitation of the rebellious German Bürschen; with hateful maxims of the delights of universal equality for ever on his lips, with the most sovereign contempt for the loyal principles of his ancestors, he laughed at the institutions and customs of past and more glorious ages, and turned into subjects for ridicule, the treasured portraits and legends of our race. Yet, deeply as I lamented his degeneracy, I loved the wild

youth with a truly paternal affection; and all might possibly have gone well, and Maximilian have been reclaimed from the errors of his ways, had he not become entangled in a fatal passion, for one so far beneath him in station, one in every way so unfit to attract the notice of my nephew, that even now I can scarcely credit his having stooped so low; for Maximilian's heart, in spite of his unhappy education, was still that of a true Wentworth."

"But, dearest uncle," Isabel ventured timidly to interpose—"my poor cousin seems to have been more misguided than criminal; and some excuse, surely, may be made for his braving your displeasure, where his heart was, in all probability, most deeply concerned."

"Isabel, I could have forgiven everything while a hope could be retained of converting him in time from the destructive principles that filled my soul with horror. Nay, even when I saw him with mind so tainted, taste so degraded, as to allow a tenant's daughter to please his

degenerate fancy, my forbearance was not at an end; and repenting of the violence wherewith, in the first heat of anger, I had driven him from my presence, I wrote advising him to withdraw himself from home for a period, until this wretched passion should be subdued; and he could return to be a comfort to my old age. Surely my severity was not disproportioned to the offence! But you will feel for me when I tell you the contents of the reply which did not reach me until a length of time had passed in miserable anxiety. It was brief, but decisive; and from the moment of its perusal, I determined to banish the unworthy writer my thoughts. Far from deprecating my anger, from professing contrition for his error, he apprised me that finding his presence was no longer desired at Wentworth Court, he had resolved on employing the time which seemed likely to pass heavily with him, in joining with some old friends in an expedition in support of of the cause of the young Queen of Spain; and

that he hoped on his return to find my displeasure as completely evaporated, as would be, doubtless, his attachment to the pretty Jemima. Such was my nephew's epistle;—in this heartless manner did he put the finishing stroke to his offences and my mortifications, by thus raising his arm in defence of a cause opposed, as he well knew, to my love of legitimacy, and respect for the claims of the rightful monarch of that unhappy country; and Maximilian Wentworth, the sole heir of our loyal and ancient house, is now confounded with a troop of nameless adventurers, in a disgraceful and ignominious contest!"

"But if he returns, as he doubtless will, convinced that the cause which momentarily attracted his interest deserves not his continued support!" Isabel earnestly exclaimed.

Her uncle shook his head in answer to her tone of entreaty.

"Hither, my child, Maximilian will not return. He has ample means at his command

to prevent the occurrence of pecuniary difficulties; and the Wentworth title, with entailed property more than sufficient for its maintenance, must be his at no distant period. All whereof I have the disposal shall go where it will be more worthily expended,—where my heart and affections have found a better resting-place!" And tenderly embracing his nieces, Sir Arthur, with a slow and feeble step, retired for the night.

When, the next day, the Miss Wentworths called at the Rectory to inquire after their late companions, Mrs. Tresham had not yet risen, and Mrs. Lambert, alone in the drawing-room, was evidently by no means in her usual good humour.

"It does seem very unreasonable, I acknowledge, to be dissatisfied with any one for liking to be quiet, and not give trouble;" she said, after her complacency had been restored in some degree, as she declared, by the sight of her young guests' cheerful faces.

"But everybody knows I am never quiet myself, and of course I cannot be expected to understand this. When people are ill, they want to be nursed; when people are dull, they want to be amused; but what is to be done with a person who neither moves hand nor foot; and do what I will, says only, with her soft voice and sleepy smile, 'Don't trouble yourself, my dear Mrs. Lambert;—indeed, I am quite comfortable.' Wishing, no doubt, all the time, that troublesome woman would let her alone!"

"Mrs. Tresham is evidently so delicate that she cannot but have suffered from fatigue and alarm, during the storm to which you were all so unfortunately exposed," observed Melicent.

"She took it quietly enough, as she does everything," answered Mrs. Lambert. "As soon as you were gone she went down to her cabin, and we saw no more of her till her brother carried her to the boat. She was good enough to send her French maid, however, to see if we wanted anything; only, as you may suppose,

she was not of much use. When the storm began, I was very thankful, I can assure you, my dear young ladies, to know that you were safe, especially as Mrs. Mortimer became so frightened, and the Miss Severns so ill, that really I hardly knew which way to turn. Then, while we were in this confusion, Mr. Tresham began to quiz us all, in his odd way, which I am too old to care for; but the girls were sadly vexed, and Maria very foolishly cried. At last I told him that I thought he might be better employed than in joining his disagreeable friend Mr. Stanley in laughing at our distresses; and after that, he turned over quite a new leaf, and was as pleasant and considerate as he had before been provoking and careless."

"And did not Lord Lymington exert himself to assist his guests?" asked Isabel.

"That is just what I was expecting you to inquire, my love! The fact is, we should never have gone through it as we did without him, and his cheerful looks and speeches whenever he

could come to us. But he always was pleasant and good-humoured from a boy."

"How fortunate that you had not to stay out all night in so uncomfortable a condition," said Melicent. "I do not wonder at your resolving to avoid all water-parties for the future."

"That is what I am sure all the others might be expected to agree in; or, at any rate, to be able to enjoy a few days spent sociably among us all. But actually there are those three men so infatuated, that they went away this morning in the yacht, as they said, to meet a brother of Mrs. Tresham's at Portsmouth; but I dare say if she had not fancied herself too unwell for company, and I had been able to make a pleasant party for them here last night, they would not have tired of their quarters so soon. Certainly, yesterday was the dullest day I ever knew at the Parsonage! I told them that our Infirmary Ball was next Tuesday, and after they were gone, I could not help saying to Mrs. Tresham that I was afraid they might not be back in

time; when the provoking woman answered, quite energetically for her, 'Surely Frank and Tresham will never be foolish enough to come such a distance for a ball!' So I suppose they will not be here after all. I am sure I pity Mr. Tresham for having such a perfect doll of a wife! No wonder he should want to get away from her; and Lord Lymington, I think, never seems happy when he sees them together, and perhaps took him away the sooner for that reason."

CHAPTER IX.

"But trust me, gentles, never yet
Was dight a masquing half so neat,
Or half so rich before:
The country gave the sweet perfumes,
The sea the pearl, the sky the plumes,
The town its silken store."

PARNELL.

ALMOST from time immemorial, as Mrs. Lambert assured the Miss Wentworths, Sir Arthur and his family, with all the principal gentry of the neighbourhood, had been accustomed to attend the Annual Infirmary Ball at Comerford; and this year it appeared that Sir Arthur promised himself peculiar gratification from the introduction of his nieces, and from witnessing Isabel's enjoyment of her first ball. On such occasions,

the Town Hall was duly surrendered into the improving hands of mine host of the Dolphin, whose stores and larder were to furnish forth the necessary refreshments; while the combined talents of himself, wife, daughters, and a number of cognoscente friends, obtained ample field for exercise in the various dainty devices of transparencies, floral arches, canopies of evergreens, and rose-coloured draperies, requisite to complete, not only the decoration of the *salle de danse*, but the transformation into a corresponding banqueting room of that lower portion of the municipal edifice, where, on days of lesser state, stalls occupied with goodly rows of fish, flesh, and fowl, were ranged in order meet for purchase.

When the party from Wentworth Court entered the ball-room, all eyes were naturally attracted towards the beautiful sisters; and it was with gratitude that, finding she could no longer be permitted to retain her station by her uncle's side, Isabel acceded to Mr. Walsingham's

request that she would allow him, as her oldest acquaintance there, to be the first honoured with her hand; while, flattered by the trusting confidence with which she seemed to depend on him for support, and which came opportunely to soothe the pride that had been wounded by her sister's indifference, Walsingham regarded with an admiration before unfelt the fair companion, whose manifest timidity so well became her fragile and delicate loveliness.

"Oh! my dear Miss Isabel, was ever anything equal to this in the way of disappointment?" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert, coming up to Isabel at the conclusion of the dance. "Only think of our all being here, and you and your sister looking so well, and those good Hickleys having done everything so cleverly about the rooms, and Lord Lymington not getting back in time after all! I declare what with the doctor laughing at me all the morning, and Mrs. Tresham taking everything so coolly, I was very near following their example, and going to bed

quietly after tea, rather than come here by myself."

"The state of the weather since Saturday ought to have prepared you for this disappointment, Mrs. Lambert," said Walsingham. "It must be impossible for Lord Lymington, in his schooner, to make the passage from Portsmouth while this wind lasts."

"So the doctor says; as if there were no ways of travelling between this and Portsmouth, without waiting for a wind! However, I am confident that Lord Lymington is not the one in fault; he would have come if he could. I dare say it was that disagreeable Mr. Stanley kept him, or that lazy Mr. Tresham."

"Of what am I accused, Mrs. Lambert?" said that gentleman, who had approached unperceived, with Lymington, during the latter part of her speech. "My activity is unimpeachable, after the exertions necessary to get here to-night. Stanley I will surrender to your censure; he would not come; but he is a useless fellow in a

ballroom, and we have enlisted a much more efficient substitute. Let me introduce to you Mrs. Tresham's elder brother, Colonel Lindesay, whom we encountered just landed from Canada. I assure you, after he had heard our account of Comerford and its neighbourhood, very little persuasion of ours was requisite to bring him hither."

"Oh, we shall do very well without Mr. Stanley!—It was for you and Lord Lymington, that Miss Isabel and I were wishing," said the delighted Mrs. Lambert, shaking hands with them, and acknowledging, with almost equal friendliness, the presentation of their companion. "But I am afraid you have been sadly hurried. What a pity that the Doctor did not think of sending for me home again to see to your being made comfortable."

"It would have been impossible for any kindness and hospitality to exceed Dr. Lambert's," said Colonel Lindesay; "knowing, however, that it must be late before we could reach Comerford,

Lymington's arrangements on the road were such as to render any further detention unnecessary; and finding that my sister had already retired, we followed you hither with scarcely any delay."

"Oh, my dear, what a handsome man!" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert, the moment it was possible for her to address Isabel unheard by the object of her remark. "But only think of Mrs. Tresham's not getting up again to see her brother, when he has been out of England for so many years!—So highly too as Lord Lymington always speaks of and looks up to him! Their half-brother he is—the late Lord Lymington married the beautiful Mrs. Lindesay, a widow with this one little boy. Her first husband was killed in the Peninsula, I fancy."

"So that is Colonel Lindesay!" said Mrs. Severn, who had now approached them. "And it was his uncle who died last year, leaving that fine property in Argyleshire? Something quite splendid, I am told. So seldom that one sees a man of fortune with corresponding personal ad-

vantages!—Now Colonel Lindesay thoroughly looks the chieftain.—Tall and soldierly—and such a remarkably pleasing smile!—I am quite anxious to see him dance. Really Miss Wentworth ought not to be engaged to Mr. Tresham. Those married men certainly are *un peu trop exigeant* sometimes in their demands upon young ladies' attention."

"Well, I must say, nothing could be worse arranged!" exclaimed Mrs. Lambert, as Lord Lymington prepared to lead Isabel to the set then forming. "Here are the Miss Wentworths both engaged, and Colonel Lindesay sitting down with Sir Arthur!—Upon my word, it is not using your brother very well to bring him all this way to a ball, and then not allow him his choice of a partner!"

"Lindesay has had a lucky escape! We found him on the point of starting for St. Austin's," said Lymington to Isabel, during the dance. "After all, the bore of finding an empty house, would have been nothing to that of passing a

fortnight there, such as I endured while the Falcon was fitting out. Stanley and Laura half dead with ennui, and Tresham in the worst possible humour. I assure you, Miss Wentworth, I appreciate our present good fortune, if Lindesay does not. But I do not think he seems at all disposed to quarrel with his actual position. By the way, how beautiful your sister looks to-night!"

There was probably no one in the room that evening who would have dissented from Lord Lymington's opinion of Miss Wentworth's excelling loveliness; although one or two cavillers might be found in the crowd, disposed, like Walsingham, to consider that the smiles of Melicent were lavished too liberally on all around her; and who, unable or unwilling to recognise the kindness of heart, and richly stored intellect, whence her animation derived its source, ascribed it to gratified vanity and the love of indiscriminate admiration. Among these cavillers, however, Colonel Lindesay evidently was not to be

numbered. Neither the extreme beauty and grace of Miss Wentworth, nor her wit and vivacity, as she and Tresham, at intervals, joined in conversation with Sir Arthur and himself, failed in producing their due effect upon him. He hastened, as soon as it was possible, to claim her hand, and continued to be her escort during the general movement which took place upon the announcement of supper. They were accompanied down stairs by Lymington and Isabel, and took their seats at one of the long tables, with Mr. Tresham and Mrs. Lambert immediately opposite.

"Is not this a delicious locality?" exclaimed Lymington, glancing admiringly at the garlanded walls and fantastic decorations of the board before them. "These viands ought to have a zest like the fruit one gathers fresh from the tree, or whitebait eaten at Blackwall. My old tutor, Dr. Lambert, would have been reminded of reading Homer among the ruins of Troy. How interesting to reflect that in this very spot, the

pigeons now lying in their envelope of paste before us, first tempted the purveying eye of Mrs. Hickley—perhaps, who knows?—cooed their last. Positively, the image is too pathetic—Miss Wentworth, will you take wine?"

"You will infect us all with your melancholy," said Melicent. "Even I cannot refrain from indulging in forebodings of to-morrow's saddened feelings, when the site of this glittering scene shall have reverted to its original destination."

"Pardon me if I suggest to you, Miss Wentworth," said Colonel Lindesay, "that the melancholy usually attendant on the revisiting of some 'banquet hall deserted,' might, in the present case, be alleviated by the useful care of providing for the family dinner. That homely duty might thus, too, be invested with a more romantic garb, and going to market rendered the favourite solace of many a sentimental damsel anxious to recal pleasures too quickly faded."

"Are you talking about the market place, Miss Wentworth?" asked Mrs. Lambert, across

the table. "I am sure Mr. Hickley deserves infinite credit for making things look so well. If the Doctor were here to night, he would enjoy telling Colonel Lindesay a number of interesting anecdotes about Charles the Second, when he used to be staying at Wentworth Court, and dined in the old Town Hall with the Mayor and Corporation. Mr. Severn!" she continued, calling to the accomplished Augustus, who was seated at a short distance; "can you tell Miss Wentworth and Colonel Lindesay anything about King Charles and the market place?"

Mr. Augustus Severn, much annoyed at this interruption of his flirtation with Miss Euphemia Jennings, a young lady with very long ringlets, briefly replied, "It really is a subject, madam, upon which I must beg to profess the most profound ignorance." He had, however, lost the opportunity of completing his conquest of Miss Euphemia, towards whom Tresham now turning gravely observed; "Perhaps we may be more fortunate in obtaining information from Mr.

Severn's neighbour, Miss Jennings; who, from her striking resemblance to Lely's bewitching portrait of her namesake, I should imagine, may possess among her family records, traditional details wherewith to favour us of Charles and his court?"

The fair object of this address looked at first somewhat undecided as to its reception; but deeming it best to be guided in her reply by her own strict ideas of propriety, she said, in a very emphatic tone and manner:—

"You must permit me, Sir, to disclaim, like Mr. Severn, all acquaintance, and still more any resemblance or connection, with the personages of the very incorrect period to which you have been pleased to allude. I believe, Mr. Severn, we were discussing the superiority of Moore's poetry over that of Scott or Byron," the young lady added, as she turned to resume her conversation with Augustus.

"Can you not make me useful in any way to-

night, Miss Wentworth?" enquired Mr. Tresham, approaching Melicent, during the progress of the galop organized by Lymington and Miss Severn after supper. "Remember my manful endurance in your service of the angry glances of the sombre Knight of Marchwood, at our last meeting, and reward me by discovering that you have another troublesome suitor to be discouraged. I have not yet told you what a complete heroine you appeared to me when I saw you venturing on that memorable occasion within the very den of the green eyed-monster."

"My heroism, Mr. Tresham, did not, it seems, inspire you with emulation; since you refused Mr. Walsingham's hospitable invitation, and suffered me to incur, unwarned and unassisted, whatever danger might lurk in the adventure."

"I can at least assure you of the reluctance with which I saw you quit the schooner, and felt myself obliged to leave you to your fate.

Marchwood, though not without its capabilities, is certainly not the dwelling I would assign to Miss Wentworth. But do not employ me to find a bower and a knight worthy of you. I should be indeed fastidious; or rather, I would at once banish all competitors to an immeasurable distance, and declare myself ready, like the covetous guardian of some peerless princess of the olden time, to do battle with any who should presume to think themselves worthy of my lovely charge."

"Your unfitness for the post is so evident even to yourself, Mr. Tresham," said Melicent, laughing, "that I am really at a loss to know how to grant your petition for employment."

"Nay, while you endure me here, I am working to my heart's content the discomfiture of a host of luckless admirers. My stalwart brother-in-law, for one, is probably adding the present grudge to the long score already run up between us. Do not blush, I entreat you, unless you would draw upon me the summary

vengeance of your impatient cavaliers. If you will honour me with your hand in the quadrille now forming, I will, however, defy dirk and claymore, while assured that I am not interfering where others have a better claim to offer themselves."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Severn, in another part of the room, was employed in re-adjusting her daughter's ringlets, disordered by the rapid motion of the galop.

"Why will you look so criticisingly, Mr. Walsingham?" she said to that gentleman, as he stood near her in conversation with Colonel Lindesay. "It is, as you would say, all very wrong. What indeed can equal the folly of a dance which disarranges the dress and spoils the complexion for the remainder of the evening? I have nothing to say in defence of my hoyden—Louisa's spirits *are* too high. We must share the penalty; she must remain quiet for the next ten minutes; and I may be mortified by comparing her appearance with that of Miss

Wentworth, who emerges, you see, from her quiet corner with Mr. Tresham, with a toilette as delicately *fraiche* and *soignée* as ever."

"Whatever may be your own sentiments, Mrs. Severn, you have certainly succeeded in misinterpreting mine," answered Walsingham, with considerable acerbity of manner. "There are dispositions which appear to me likely to lead to much more blameable lengths than the love of dancing. Miss Severn's liveliness incurs far less risk of blame from me than does Miss Wentworth's willing admission of such attentions as Mr. Tresham's. I beg your pardon, Lindesay," he added, lowering his tone as he turned towards him, "but you must be aware that your brother-in-law's conduct and principles have not been so entirely *sans reproche*, as fully to justify a young lady's continued preference of his society."

"Oh, you men! who will now accuse *us* of being uncharitable?" cried Mrs. Severn, playfully. "Now I, in my double character of Mamma

and chaperone, have never found half as many severe things to say upon the chapter of flirtation, as Mr. Walsingham seems ready to bestow on poor Miss Wentworth for her rational and harmless tête-á-tête in the corner of a ballroom with a married man!"

"That married man, your prudence will suggest to you, Mrs. Severn, ought not be allowed to keep all others at a distance. It is strange how soon, when a woman once acquires a taste for flattery, she grows bewildered enough by it to forget even the interests of her own darling vanity!"

"Poor Mr. Walsingham!" observed Mrs. Severn to Lindesay, as Walsingham walked away too much irritated for further conversation. "One must really make allowance for a little soreness of feeling in his case. Perhaps he was not altogether quite well used. But why should we blame Miss Wentworth? Fascinating as she is, it is easy to account for Mr. Walsingham's mistake. As long as he had the fair lady

to himself, no doubt he thought himself the happy man. A little want of cordiality on his part towards your relations, you must overlook, Colonel Lindesay, since it was their arrival that first taught him the insecurity of his position, and their successful competitorship that forced him to retire from the field."

"Miss Wentworth, from all accounts, appears to be a most accomplished coquette," remarked Colonel Lindesay.

"Now that is such an ugly word, I cannot suffer you to apply it to my charming young friend," returned Mrs. Severn. "She has been a beauty from her cradle, you know; and surely those sweet words and smiles are but the due return for the admiration meeting her everywhere. Colonel Lindesay, you must not remain the only heretic among so many worshippers. No one but a cynic could hesitate. I must hear you pronounce her perfection!"

"Of Miss Wentworth's beauty there can be no doubt," answered Lindesay somewhat

drily. "Less of brilliancy and more of reserve would, I confess, be essential to my ideas of the perfection of the female character."

"Oh Colonel Lindesay," said Mrs. Severn, smiling, "how many profess such sentiments, and how do they act upon them? You gentlemen may admire reserve and dignity, indeed, but they seem to keep you effectually at a distance. Compare my poor Maria, on her solitary *banquette*, with Miss Wentworth's circle of admirers. But Maria is really too quiet for this showy age of ours. 'Let me alone, Mamma,' she often says; 'I am happy as long as I am suffered to creep through life unnoticed and unseen.'"

Colonel Lindesay glanced in the direction pointed out, but he was doomed to afford by his conduct a practical illustration of Mrs. Severn's theory. Upon the first pretext afforded by an appeal from Lymington, he joined the group that had formed round Melicent, nor was any trace of the cynicism for which he had been

upbraided, to be discerned in the feelings which detained him by her side during the remainder of the evening, and incited him to rival even Tresham himself in his successful efforts to second the liveliness and animation which had not long before been the objects of his reprehension.

CHAPTER X.

" A dreary place, I ween, it was,
And mournful to behold;
Above—the winds did doleful blow,
Below—dark waters rolled."

THE DOWY DEN.

IT would have been difficult for any one to attain a higher degree of merit in the eyes of Mrs. Lambert than she ascribed to Colonel Lindesay, when, on the day after the ball, he declined accompanying Tresham and Lymington on board their yacht; and disposed himself to enjoy a quiet morning in his sister's society, after their late separation. But, long before the afternoon, Mrs. Tresham, languid and unwell as usual, had given up all attempts at conversation,

and sought repose, even from listening, on her couch; and disappointed at the ill success of his endeavours to rouse her to the slightest display of interest or animation, Lindesay at length mounted his horse for a solitary ride, Dr. Lambert's engagements preventing him from undertaking his favourite office of cicerone.

Leaving the banks of the Comerford river, the road he pursued lay for some miles through deep and narrow lanes, terminating in a wide tract of forest-land, where tangled thickets of trees and underwood alternated with patches of barren moor, rendered slippery of passage by the frequent morasses occasioned by the springs of water which rose amidst the turf, and spread in stagnant pools across the path. The only signs of human habitation which had for some time been visible, were afforded after gaining the highest spot on a wild and bleak common, across which the wind, which had been violent all the morning, was now sweeping furiously, driving along with it dark masses of clouds,

which gave a wintry aspect to the scene. A number of low hovels, with mud walls, and roofs covered with furze, so as to be scarcely discernible from the surface of the moor, were scattered around a dark pool, sunk deep beneath high banks, and overhung by a few old and scathed-looking alders; while, in front of the huts, as Lindesay drew nearer, he saw, surrounded by a crowd of uncouth-looking men, and ragged women and children, and attended by a groom, a lady on horseback, in whom he recognised, with some surprise, the beautiful Miss Wentworth of the preceding evening.

The slight but not ungraceful confusion with which she accosted him, and the gratitude he saw evinced towards her by her rough companions, excited a new interest in Lindesay's mind;—his voice became unconsciously softer, and his eye betrayed the admiration she had inspired, while she rode with him to some distance from the scene of their encounter.

"You will scarcely thank me for being glad

to see you, Colonel Lindesay," she said, smiling. "I was becoming, though, I believe, without any reason, half afraid of my new friends. This desolate scene, with only a few poor women and children, to whom I hoped to be of service, had nothing to alarm me. But to-day the gale detains their husbands from their dangerous trade; and your appearance, I confess, was as welcome as it was unlooked-for."

"Danger, in the present case, I think there was little to apprehend," replied Lindesay, "from those whom your kindness appeared for the moment to have thoroughly subdued. The men, I take it for granted, are smugglers; but, surely, you are not in the habit of venturing with such slender protection into their lawless neighbourhood."

"My protegés are certainly not of the most respectable description, Colonel Lindesay, and I cannot say much in their defence. The blame of my visits, however, rests partly with Dr. Lambert, who does not think it right to assist

them openly himself; but who is so kind-hearted that I doubt not the moving description he gave me of the extreme poverty of their families was intended to awaken my compassion for the poor people he was not able to relieve. But ought we not to make the best of our way while the ground admits? Those clouds look more threateningly than ever, and a storm in the middle of Sway Heath would be a worse encounter than any my fears have suggested."

Her manner had not discouraged Lindesay's attendance, and they rode rapidly across the common, in the direction of Wentworth Court. Lindesay looked back for a moment before entering upon the rugged descent into a more sheltered district.

"It is dreary, indeed," he remarked; "and yet, will you believe it, Miss Wentworth? I leave this desolate spot with a regret more varied and cultivated scenes would scarcely produce. As I look around on this barren moor, with the angry wind careering over it, raising the heather

and the fern, it is as though I were once more among my native wilds; and you know not the charm of that feeling to a Highlander, when the very air he breathes seems purer and more exhilarating, as it sweeps uncontaminated over the blooming heather!"

"I will forgive your contempt for hedge-rows trim and alleys green, Colonel Lindesay," replied Melicent. "Even for southern imaginations, Scotland possesses so much romantic interest, that the claims of our tamely picturesque scenery are readily yielded, even by those, like myself, to whom your mountain glens and fastnesses are as yet untrodden ground."

"Would that the wizard power were mine, Miss Wentworth, to transport you by a wish to some of those spots among which my childhood was passed—on the summit of Ben Venue, for instance, to look down thence on the glorious Trosachs piling their rocky pyramids, with their beautiful crown of oak and ivy mingling with the Alpine pine, the mountain ash, and the graceful

branches of the weeping birch, between the sister waters of Loch Katrine and Loch Achray.

"Craigs, knolls, and mounds, confusedly hurled,
The fragments of an earlier world."

"I would, too, that you could witness those changing aspects which his native hills are constantly assuming to the Highlander. At one moment the rushing wind raises the eddying mists as from an abyss, then pours them again from above in dark masses, till the mountains are veiled entirely from view:—the next, the clouds before them are lifted like a curtain to display their bold and rugged outlines, lit up by a sudden gleam of sunshine, with the dispersing vapours rolling far away, twisting and wreathing into strange and phantom-like forms."

"You have said quite enough, Colonel Lindesay, to make me for ever discontented with the lot which places me merely in the most beautiful county of England; you must not now refuse to atone for the mischief you have

wrought, by continuing to transport me, in fancy at least, among the scenes you describe so vividly."

"Let me be your guide then, Miss Wentworth, on a walk such as you could scarcely find elsewhere than in the Highlands. Imagine yourself in a green valley—mountains covered with verdure rising gradually on either hand; and becoming, as you proceed, more rocky and abrupt. Ascending slowly, you are now winding along a steep ravine—below you foams and thunders a mountain torrent, dashing impetuously over its rocky bed; while, farther on, a rude Alpine bridge hangs above the cataract, amidst a thousand wreaths of ivy and feathering shrubs that fringe its jagged supports. Dare you cross that narrow bridge, Miss Wentworth, unprovided as it is with any kind of parapet?"

"Oh yes! with your assistance I am sure I shall achieve the exploit safely; and it would, indeed, require no slight risk to deter me from proceeding on such a ramble."

"You are worthy of being taken through such scenes," said Lindesay, smiling; "therefore we will conclude the other side fairly attained, since I would not yet recommend you to pause on the dizzy height and look down on the roaring flood; and, now, we will pursue our walk along a rough and stony path, bringing us, after a descent of some length, suddenly upon the shore of one of our mountain lakes. Black masses of rock rise abruptly on every side; and standing beside those motionless waters, one might believe no foot had ever trespassed on that solitude—no human voice ever disturbed its lonely silence. All at once the stillness is broken—your approach has roused the numerous wild fowl that inhabit the lone tarn; and with shrill screams they rise in clouds into the air, wheeling round and round, and awakening the countless echoes by their noisy cries. Sometimes, indeed, the stillness may remain uninterrupted, save by the eagle or the heron, those

birds of solitude, whose presence marks the spot as seldom visited by man."

"I feel indeed like an intruder, and as if the sounds you have named should be solely permitted to disturb such appropriate silence. But your glens and valleys cannot remain untenanted;—they are haunted by the spirits of the past, and the visionary associations of romance, and you will have to furnish me with a legend for every flood and fell. I assure you I have superstition enough, now my imagination is thoroughly excited, to please the wildest of your Gaelic Seers."

"You would be invaluable as a victim to be lionized there! You would people the caves of Staffa and the hills of woody Morven with the ghosts of Fingal and Ossian; and believe, as you gazed upon the roaring Corra Linn, that you saw along its banks

"Sweep visibly the Wallace wight!"

"Nay, Colonel Lindesay, this is treacherous!

I am unused to be taxed with romance, and cannot allow you to laugh at an enthusiasm with which you have yourself embued me; for, certainly, even our short acquaintance has taught me that the Colonel Lindesay of ordinary society, and Colonel Lindesay talking of the Highlands on a barren moor, are two very different persons."

Lindesay smiled again; for such, had they been acknowledged, would have appeared his own thoughts, at that moment, with regard to his companion. He was wrong, notwithstanding; since the change, in fact, lay not in herself, but in his perception of her character; and it was the frailty of his man's nature that caused the graces which had almost given him umbrage, when displayed in a ball-room, in the frank guilelessness of their owner's heart, to acquire a very different interest when exerted for him alone, without other eye or ear at hand to admire or be gratified. He contented himself with replying,

"It is you, Miss Wentworth, who may well be entitled to laugh at the rhapsodies in which I have indulged. But you are the only person I have lately met with inclined to sympathise in the pride and affection wherewith I regard my native hills; and your kind interest has led me to be more figurative than is my wont. We have now, however, left far behind us the spot where I was first reminded of my own savage solitudes; and I hope to become again a rational being, as we return to civilised life and cultivated scenery."

Although Melicent possessed not, like Isabel, the faculty of investing with romance the events and personages of ordinary life, she was not the less capable of fully appreciating true elevation of mind and character. The conversation which had sprung from her accidental encounter with Lindesay, had to both the charm of developing, almost strangers as they were, feelings which

few casual observers would have suspected in either of them;—Melicent's engaging manners as effectually concealing real depth of feeling, and the ardour of a warm and generous nature, as did the reserved demeanour of the man whom she had beheld as the chieftain among his native mountains. Having little expected Mrs. Tresham to partake in the interest inspired by Lindesay's vivid descriptions, it was with surprise that Melicent found the details of her morning's ride regarded by her with unwonted curiosity.

"And so Kenneth talked to you about the Highlands?" she said, after availing herself of the opportunity of being left alone with Melicent, to draw from her every particular of her meeting with her brother. "How very pleasant it must have been, and how well you must have entered into it all, for him to be so enthusiastic! Oh! you would be delighted with him if you saw Strathmorven, and knew all the good he

does there. He is so active and independent, and so like you in many things. How well you would suit each other!"

"I wish Colonel Lindesay could have seen you listening to me a moment ago!" said Melicent, laughing. "How strange it is that you should show more interest in my repetition than when I saw him taking so much pains to please and amuse you."

"That is because hearing you is like hearing Kenneth himself, and with you I am not frightened as I always am when he begins to talk to me. I dare say he thinks I do not like him at all because I never do speak to him; but really I think it would be the most delightful thing in the world to be Kenneth's wife; and I should like it beyond measure, only it would not do for him to have any one so lazy as I am; and Tresham suits me exactly, because he never troubles himself about me, and does not care what I do."

CHAPTER XI.

" The steps
Young ladies tread, left to their own discretion,
However wisely printed, are observed
And construed as the lookers-on presume."
THE LADY'S TRIAL.

" You will remain some time in the south, then? since I conclude that from Dorsetshire you go to St. Austin's, where Mr. Tresham talks of residing till the autumn," said Walsingham to Lindesay, as they pursued together the unfrequented track along the cliffs, which formed the shortest path between Comerford and Marchwood.

" There is little dependence to be placed on any of Tresham's plans," replied his companion.

"My present engagement to my old friend and brother officer, Chudleigh, is of long standing; and after its fulfilment, business connected with my leaving the army will take me up to town. If I go to Tresham's, therefore, it will not be till the end of the summer, when his fancy for yachting and retirement will probably be over. I own I shall not be sorry to be spared the visit. It is easy to see that no improvement has taken place in a household too nearly connected with me to be viewed with indifference; and wherein I can now scarcely imagine Tresham the only one to blame, or hope that my sister is the kind of woman to improve her own prospects of happiness."

"Mrs. Tresham's position is one that few women would endure as unblameably," returned Walsingham; "and while men like your brother-in-law are universally courted in society, her influence can be expected to weigh but lightly against the flatteries of such women as Melicent Wentworth. *I* have learned to appre-

ciate your sister's quiet and retiring demeanour, and should regret to see it exchanged for the meteor-like brilliancy of her rival."

"Certainly I should not have thought of comparing Laura and Miss Wentworth," replied Lindesay; "had I done so, I fear the inference would scarcely have been so much to my sister's advantage. Your severity, the other night, Walsingham, did not lead me to imagine Miss Wentworth likely to be found unostentatiously relieving distress, and extending the sphere of her gentleness and grace to a set of beings whom she alone seemed to have had the active benevolence to discover and assist."

"Graceful I dare be sworn she was!" remarked Walsingham, sarcastically. "Were you not there to admire? I have heard of the adventure, and doubted not its effect upon you. Before grace and tact so inimitable, all barriers founded on earlier prejudices and opinions vanish into nothing. Dangerous at all times, there she must have been irresistible; and I can

readily believe that, within four-and-twenty hours, Miss Wentworth's versatile genius and admirable knowledge of character, would convert her, from the gay and animated beauty, to the charitable saint and the romantic enthusiast. Yet even the excitement of a Comerford ball, and the smiles she could not refrain from bestowing on that ridiculous Fosbrooke, might have shown you her real character."

"She was amused by his excessive pomposity; but that surely was pardonable. You are harsh in your judgment, Walsingham. Miss Wentworth's amiability of disposition at least is vouched for by the warm affection she seems to have secured from almost all around her."

"She once possessed mine!" said Walsingham, gloomily; "and bitterly has my knowledge of her heartlessness been attained. Others must pay the same price—but yours is not a heart to be thrown away upon a mere coquette. Avoid her, Lindesay, for hers are the very fascinations most dangerous to a man of refined

tastes and habits. The owner of these old walls and decayed estates was but a toy for her amusement—you may be a victim to be secured; but once your wife, no Highland castle will be Melicent's home. Your pursuits must be sacrificed at the shrine of vanity—your existence frittered away among associates you despise, unless you can endure the perpetual complaints and hopeless ennui of the spoiled beauty, weeping for the days of triumphant conquest in her remote and uncongenial solitude."

Walsingham spoke with the energy of conviction; for, ever distrustful of excellence in women, and still smarting under the effect of Melicent's repulses, he had persuaded himself of her utter incapability of meriting the affection of such a man as Lindesay; nor was the latter unmoved by the unflattering picture he had drawn.

"You have exaggerated my danger," he replied, after a pause. "Alive as I own myself to be to charms of manner and person like Miss

Wentworth's, such is not the woman of whom I could ever think seriously. My home will be at Strathmorven—there must my wife find her happiness;—attached to it are all my plans for the future; there is not a spot among its mountains and glens, or a peasant in its cottages, that is not endeared to me by numberless associations; and it was only by the apparent depth of such natural and simple emotions, aroused by my own enthusiasm, that Miss Wentworth won me to become, for the time, her advocate."

Walsingham and Lindesay, with the whole party from the Parsonage, had dined at Wentworth Court on this, the last evening of Colonel Lindesay's stay at Comerford. His departure was followed, within a few days, by that of Mr. Tresham and Lord Lymington, on a cruize which they talked of extending as far as the Mediterranean. Mrs. Tresham, by Sir Arthur's invitation, was to spend the period of their absence at Wentworth Court; and Melicent and Isabel contemplated with some misgiving, the

prospect of a lengthened visit from one who appeared so little capable of amusing or occupying herself. When comfortably settled in her new abode, however, their guest was very far from creating any of the annoyance they had anticipated. As long as she was indulged in the luxury of perfect idleness, Mrs. Tresham always appeared tolerably contented; and her easy temper, and pleasing, though rather affected manners, rendered her, in fact, a more desirable inmate than many of livelier intellect might have proved. Happy in being called upon for no exertion of body or mind, she was fully satisfied to recline upon a sofa, half asleep over the pages of a very quiet book, and desirous of no other species of entertainment; although, when her really delicate health permitted, and her intimacy with the sisters increased, her spirits would occasionally rise so far as to render her conversation even agreeable.

It was not very long before the kindly and affectionate disposition of the sisters inspired

them with a degree of attachment for their indolent companion, whose amiability and gentleness became apparent, on farther acquaintance; and Melicent, in particular, was visibly attracted, by a character and manners so different, in most respects, from her own. Many pleasant hours of the day were now spent by the side of Mrs. Tresham's sofa, on their return from the walks and rides, wherein she could never be persuaded to join; and long after Sir Arthur had retired for the night, she would protract her stay in the drawing-room, amused by Melicent's lively conversation, or listening to the music of Isabel's harp and voice,—her own soft and engaging manners deriving peculiar interest from the alteration which had almost unconsciously taken place in their former lifeless inanity.

"I cannot understand," said she, one evening, while reposing in her luxurious fauteuil, with her pretty little feet embedded in the softest of footstools,—"I cannot understand how people looking delicate and feminine, like you

and Isabel, can endure the extreme fatigue and excitement to which you are constantly exposed. Half your exertion would kill me in a week ! "

" Oh no !—you would not only survive it, but be greatly the better for the moderate exercise. Try it, and I am certain you would find the variety delightful."

" Impossible, my dear ! I abhor variety and excitement, for which Tresham is continually longing, and dragging me about from place to place in quest of it. If he will not consent to leave me in peace, in some spot where I may establish myself for the remainder of my life in such an easy chair as this, without greater variety than a change to one of your comfortable sofas, we shall be compelled finally to separate, on the ground of thorough incompatibility of taste."

" Yet it is the common opinion, that contrast of disposition is conducive to matrimonial felicity ; you, I am sure, are entertained by Mr.

Tresham's vivacity, and he, in return, must certainly find in you an invaluable listener."

"Tresham's vivacity!—he has usually dreadfully low spirits.—I assure you when we are alone, I am much the liveliest of the two,—for really, though very often ill, wearied, and good for nothing, I scarcely ever felt unhappy in my life."

"Indeed!—few, I should imagine, could say as much; and yours must, after all, have been an unusually fortunate lot."

"No,—I rather think not," answered Mrs. Tresham, smiling;—"and incline to ascribe it principally to the easiness of my temper. What will you say, Isabel, when I tell you that, in other hands, my history, which I want energy to relate, once promised to assume as romantic an aspect as even you could desire?"

"Is it possible?—you do indeed surprise me, for I should have fancied that you had always been the object of such care,—such a regularly spoiled child, that nothing could ever have been

allowed to happen to you. Now, however, you may be certain that I shall not leave you at rest, until you have told me every thing,—so pray begin your adventures at once."

"Adventures!—Heaven forbid that I should have undergone any!—I only said, that another might have looked for them, in the position wherein I was placed; for my birthplace, Isabel, and the scene where my first girlhood was spent, was that Italy I have heard you express so earnest a longing to behold."

"In Italy,—in that delightful land of romance? Oh, how I envy you!—but do pray tell us all you saw there, and every thing you used to do."

"Do?—nothing!—see?—the highborn women of that sunny clime are too indolent even to look around them,—and my father's sister, with whom I was left after my mother's death, was married to a Milanese nobleman, and had completely adopted the habits of his country. You see, Isabel, that in my Italian home, and yet more

in the character of my guardian, (for she was cold and haughty enough to inspire any one with fear,) I possessed ample advantages in the heroic line. But I suppose I had too little talent that way to be miserable. I was neglected, it is true ; nor do I remember ever receiving one mark of affection from the Marchesa, who, beyond directing that I should receive an education suitable to my rank, never seemed to think about me at all. My wish for occupation never was greater than it is now ; but I had a short and easy routine of daily tasks, and these performed, it was sufficient enjoyment to lie for hours beneath that sultry climate, dreaming, Isabel, I fear I must confess, of nothing more romantic than the pleasant idleness I might now indulge in for the rest of the day. I had none to love but myself, nothing to disturb me, except the recurrence of my stated lessons,—no indulgence beyond the satisfaction of the *dolce far niente*."

"Where were your brothers all this time?"

asked Melicent. "Lord Lymington surely loves you tenderly, and his nature and feelings appear warm and animated in the extreme."

"Oh, I love Frank more than all the world; though he is so active and lively, that I know my laziness annoys him. But he was then at school in England; and Kenneth, owing to his being with his regiment, I never saw, till after my marriage, when he disliked Tresham so much, that I was not sorry for his being ordered abroad again. My father died before I was fifteen, and the guardians he had appointed claimed the care of me, just when circumstances inspired the Marchesa with needless apprehensions concerning the trouble I might henceforward occasion her. My large fortune was known, and the young Milanese cavaliers began to assemble round our equipage on the Corso; more than one serenade was given under my windows, and more than one billet was cast into my lap, with a bouquet of flowers, during our evening drive. I was too much of a child to

pay any attention to their courtship,—their troublesome music only sent me to sleep, and I gave the notes, unopened, to the Marchesa. Still her fears were not to be quieted, and it was with evident satisfaction that she consigned me at last to my English guardians, who were eager, I suppose, to profit by my wealth, and certainly cared little personally about me. Well, my dears, to England I came,—to my guardian's country seat;—to town. I was dressed, paraded,—carried about to balls and operas,—from one scene of festivity to another. I had not energy of will to resist,—I had not energy of body to support it;—and that London season was certainly the most miserable portion of my existence. I was not desirous of marrying,—I hated the trouble of the thing; but anything was preferable to the life I was then leading,—and Tresham's proposals were made at the moment when I was tired to death after a crowded dejeuner, and had just been informed of the necessity of joining a delightful party going

down to the Duke of Richmond's, for Goodwood races. The opportunity for escape was irresistible. I accepted Tresham, and made that an excuse for not accompanying my friends.

"As Tresham perfectly agreed with me in wishing to avoid as much of the annoyance of a wedding as possible, we were married very privately, and then went down to Derbyshire, for a month's grouse shooting.—I have heard many people complain of the irksomeness of what is called the honey-moon, but really I thought mine very comfortable, after the journey was over. Mr. Tresham met a large party of friends, with whom he was out on the moors all day, while I was able to do exactly what I pleased,—which with me meant doing nothing. Then, when they came back in the evening, we managed very well, for they were generally so tired that they were half asleep; and, altogether, it really was so very nice, that I have gone down with Tresham every year since our marriage, to that pleasant house near Castleton, and always

felt sorry when he grew tired of grouse shooting. But can it be possible, that I have made you sit up half the night, listening to my history! —How very absurd!—Tresham would think me crazy!"

And before the Miss Wentworths had ceased remarking upon the insight afforded by her narrative, into the causes which might have originally produced her inertness of disposition, Mrs. Tresham's eyes had closed in peaceful and dreamless slumbers.

CHAPTER XII.

" The boat rides south o' Ailsa's craig,
In the dowpin o' the night;
There's thirty men at Lendalfit,
To mak' her burthen light."

AINSLIE.

" OF whom is to-day's party to consist?" inquired Mrs. Tresham, as, worn out with the fatigue of dressing and walking from her apartment to the drawing-room, she sank into her arm-chair, near the table, at which Melicent was arranging some beautiful hot-house flowers. " I never saw you both look so lovely. On whose account can you have so evidently arrayed yourselves for conquest?"

" Is it possible," asked Melicent, with affected

wonder, "that you do not know that Mr. Fosbrooke dines here to-day?"

"I am not even aware of ever having heard of the existence of this particular Mr. Fosbrooke. Pray who may he be?"

"He is an Indian nabob," replied Melicent; "so wealthy, that even the jewels he wears on his person would make one comfortable for life; and so old, that one might entertain a reasonable hope of enjoying his possessions one day without encumbrance. I am told that he professes himself my devoted admirer, and that he is looking out for a wife. What course would you advise me to pursue?"

"Oh! marry him, by all means, my dear! Those old Indians must make most desirable husbands; for they are so accustomed to the indolent habits of that delightful country, that they would never expect their wives to do anything but lie on a sofa all day and look pretty—which is the pleasantest thing imaginable!"

Melicent could not agree with Mrs. Tresham,

and thought that the indolent husband would require waiting on; and would probably, therefore, need an active wife, besides being too selfish to allow his helpmate the repose so much prized by himself. In the midst of their discussion, Mr. Fosbrooke, a cadaverous-looking personage, wearing multifarious chains and costly gems, was announced. The first salutation over, he began, addressing himself pointedly to Melicent;—

"I have this morning been completing the purchase of an estate, Miss Wentworth, for which I have been some time in treaty. Thornborough Park, of which you have probably heard, is situated about eight miles hence. The mansion is at present nothing more than a comfortable English dwelling; but now that it has passed into my possession, I propose to fit it up in a style of unequalled Eastern magnificence; and, after the completion of some necessary previous arrangements, it is my intention perma-

nently to reside there, and in time to render the place a perfect Elysium."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Tresham, greatly amused with Melicent's pompous admirer; "Thornborough Park will then be quite a benefit to the neighbourhood."

"Depend upon it, Mr. Fosbrooke," said Sir Arthur, "you had better not say too much about it, lest all the young ladies in the county should be manœuvring to obtain a share in this paradise. There is my friend Mortimer's voice in the hall —what say you to his pretty sister-in-law, Miss Jennings?"

"Really, Sir Arthur, you are very obliging to have already selected a wife for me; although Miss Jennings by no means approaches my standard of female loveliness. However, I shall remember your kind concern for my matrimonial welfare, and will certainly consult you on the point before coming to a final decision."

Miss Euphemia had heard the propriety of manner and behaviour of Miss Isabel Went-

worth highly commended; and therefore, to the great surprise of her companion, whilst they were walking together in the gardens after dinner, she suddenly broke silence to ask her what was her opinion of *flirting;* and then, whilst Isabel paused in some perplexity, she went on with great fluency.

"In my opinion it is the most shocking thing possible. Now Matilda and I are disputing about it from morning till night; and I was determined to ask you, because I knew you would agree with me in thinking it very wrong indeed."

"I really never thought much about it," said Isabel, greatly entertained; "but I do not see any harm in talking and laughing, if that is what you mean."

"Oh no, that is not what people mean by flirting!" replied Miss Euphemia, looking very wise. "I assure you I think it so very reprehensible, that I made a vow when I came out never to take a *tête-à-tête* walk with a gentleman

as long as I lived. Do you not think I was quite right?"

"Quite so, if you believed that any harm was likely to be the consequence of your doing so."

"Is it possible, Miss Isabel, that you do not think it wrong to walk alone with a gentleman?" interrupted Miss Euphemia, with a face of horror. "You are just like Matilda; who, though a married woman, ridicules my strict ideas of propriety."

"Perhaps Mrs. Mortimer understands as little as I do the precise degree of indecorum in such a proceeding," replied Isabel; while at that moment, as if to display the deplorable state of the morals of the Wentworth family, Melicent and Mr. Fosbrooke were seen quietly approaching from an opposite walk.

"Oh! I suppose you spoke as you did out of consideration for your sister, Miss Isabel," said her companion, with exultation; "she is a terrible flirt, I know—I should not have asked her opinion on the subject."

"You would find it the same as mine, Miss Jennings, since her conduct in all respects is what I most wish to imitate. If you accuse Melicent of flirting, I cannot imagine that it can mean anything more than laughing and talking; but I must confess that you appear much better qualified than my sister to give advice upon the subject."

Isabel spoke with unusual warmth, quickening her pace at the same time to meet her sister, whom she could not submit to hear censured by Miss Euphemia; and whose manners, in fact, appeared to her to unite every perfection of grace and propriety.

Mr. Fosbrooke, having caught sight of Melicent from the window, had, on the gentlemen quitting the dining-room, used his best exertions to overtake and join her; and having just accomplished this, was now not a little displeased at so speedy a termination to the *tête-à-tête* he had planned. No hope of its recurrence could be at present entertained, since, on regaining

the terrace, the rest of the party were found assembled there. Even Mrs. Tresham had allowed her sofa to be wheeled out, and was gaily talking to Lady Clarence; and Sir Arthur himself felt so unusually animated, that he not long afterwards invited such of his friends as were inclined, to walk with him down to the sea shore; and, with the exception of Lady Clarence and Mrs. Tresham, the whole party set out on the expedition he had proposed.

The path selected by Sir Arthur led, at the distance of about half a mile from the house, into a narrow bridle road, descending upon the rough, shingly beach. The party had just quitted the shelter of the plantations, and entered upon the stony, though gradual declivity, when a man's head was suddenly raised above a stone wall not far from the road side; and though it was evident that the individual who had been lurking there did not desire to elude their observation, and was, in fact, one of the preventive-service men, it was still a matter of

some difficulty to quiet the easily excited apprehensions of Mrs. Mortimer and Miss Jennings upon witnessing the alarming apparition. Mr. Mortimer had meanwhile fallen back for a moment to enter into discourse with the man, who appeared desirous of speaking to him; and now overtook them, as the foremost of the walkers gained the beach, and stood admiring the tints of the glowing sunset reflected upon the waves that broke at their feet.

"I find the story Pat has to tell me is likely to last some time," said Mr. Mortimer, as he rejoined them. "The evening is growing late for the ladies, and also for you, Sir Arthur. Is there no nearer mode of returning to the Court than the circuitous path by which we arrived here?"

"If the ladies are not afraid of the ascent, and you, my good friend, will lend me your arm, there is a path yonder, steeper, it is true, than the other, but which will considerably shorten the distance to the house. Mrs. Mortimer, I

trust that you and Miss Jennings will not suffer from my imprudence, in bringing you so far at this late hour. My nieces are perhaps more accustomed to walking; but Isabel, I perceive, is not half wrapped up."

The ladies, though not apprehensive of cold for themselves, were desirous of Sir Arthur's speedy return home, and therefore agreed to the proposed change of route. Having seen them to the summit of the ascent, which was but an inconsiderable one, Mr. Mortimer turned back, promising to cut Pat's story as short as he could, and not doubting that he should reach Wentworth Court as quickly as themselves. Their progress, indeed, was not very rapid, as Sir Arthur began to feel all the imprudence of his undertaking, in the fatigue he suffered; and the sight of the tall fencing of the plantations was gladly welcomed by all. Here, nevertheless, a formidable dilemma occurred. The key produced by Sir Arthur would not enter the lock into which it was attempted to be inserted, and

was now recognized as a wrong one. The fencing was not such as might be climbed, even by more active limbs than those of most of the individuals of the present group; and as fatigue prevented Sir Arthur's return by the long and circuitous route by the beach, no other alternative presented itself, than that one of the other gentlemen should make the best of his way to the house, while the rest waited as patiently as they might for his return with the key. Walsingham readily offered his services, and greatly to the horror of Miss Euphemia, Sir Arthur, much more apprehensive of Isabel's taking cold, than of aught of mischief likely to accrue from such a proceeding, hastily desired her to accompany him.

The twilight was deepening around as Walsingham and Isabel retraced their steps towards the shore; and, although the rapidity of their motion was unfavourable to sentiment, he was yet by no means insensible to the pleasure of guarding one so lovely amidst the dreary scene

they traversed. Every ray of light had now left the dark and heaving expanse of the sea, while, though there was little wind, the advancing tide rolled threateningly into shore. Isabel shivered, and folded her shawl closer around her, and a few steps would have placed them on the beach, when, on turning an intervening rock, the sound of rough, though suppressed voices, surprised them greatly in that lonely spot, and involuntarily they paused to listen.

"To night will do for our work, I warrant. It will be pitch dark soon, and the Lieutenant's off with the best men on the wrong scent to the Cove yonder. They 'll never be up to the lugger's pushing in here just in their teeth; and before they 've smoked us, we 'll have the goods landed safe and easy."

"We're in luck to night, that's certain!" replied his comrade. "It 's so hazy that she lies out there in the mist snug enough, and even the old fox from the Custom House is up at the Court;—but come on—there they be, and we've

only to tell them to push in boldly, and there 'll soon be plenty of hands to help 'em off with the kegs, when they 're once ashore."

A small boat now became visible to Walsingham and his terrified companion, pulling hastily towards them from the direction in which the speakers had indicated that the lugger lay concealed by the increasing fog. "Fear not," whispered Walsingham, while those in the boat appeared to be receiving from their friends the communication of the favourable state of things on land;—"They are smugglers, and will doubtless be gone in a few minutes. To-night seems marked for too full employment to allow them to loiter here. They will not see us." He drew her, however, still farther beneath the shadow of the cliffs as he spoke, and Isabel gazed breathlessly upon the wild looking group before them; when, as the boatmen resumed their oars, and their colleagues lent their aid to shove off the boat, the sound of hurrying footsteps was heard along the road down the cliffs,

and a number of men belonging to the Coast-guard rushed hastily past Walsingham and Isabel towards the smugglers. The landsmen were immediately secured, but the boat's crew sent her rapidly dashing through the surf beyond the reach of their disappointed pursuers. A sharp clear report rang on the ear of Isabel, and for a moment her eyes closed, while but for Walsingham's support she would have fallen to the ground. The shot, however, apparently failed in its effect; and, yielding to the impulse of his trembling companion, Walsingham now permitted her to leave the shelter of the rocks, and approach Mr. Mortimer, whom they had recognized among the group on the beach, and who now stood looking through his glass at the boat, by this time not more than a speck upon the waters.

"The rascals have got off this time," he announced, to Isabel's great relief; then after despatching some of the men to another part of the coast, where the commanding officer of the

station had been induced to post a strong force, from a false alarm of a landing being premeditated there from a smuggling vessel that had lately been seen hovering in the distance—and others to guard the prisoners to a place of security; he was able to express his wonder and regret at Isabel's having been exposed to so much alarm. "I thought there would be some wild work here soon," he said, as they walked on towards the Court, as quickly as Isabel's trepidation would allow; "and therefore did all I could to get you safe home before any disturbance. We should have had enough to answer for to-night, if it had not been for my friend Pat's sagacity."

The individual thus alluded to, who was following them at a respectful distance, now advanced to reply to the questions addressed to him by Isabel. "Sure and I'll tell your ladyship all about it, without a word of untruth from beginning to end. Was'nt I sitting quite pleasant like, singing to myself on a gate, and

thinking no harm, when who should come by, but those two lads that we 've just got safe hold of, and mighty civil fair-weather chaps they discoursed like, but I kept a sharp look out, knowing them to be the arrantest smugglers in the whole country. So sure enough they turned about and asked whether the Lieutenant was off to the cove, and your honour up at the Court; and seeing something was in the wind, I kept an eye on them, and watched them go round to all the marked men, and then I came after your worship to tell you what I thought; only for fear of frightening the ladies, I did it private like."

Pat's watchfulness received all due commendation from his auditors, who had now regained the gardens. Whether the eulogium bestowed by him in return were disinterested or not, may be doubted, but as Pat rejoined his companion, he exclaimed, "She's a good kind creature, Mike, or else she's mighty desateful! If I was of her equality, now, I'd rather marry that sweet

young girl from the Court without a farthing, than any lady of the land with a hundred a-year!"

Isabel was greatly relieved on arriving at home, to find Sir Arthur and the whole party assembled in the drawing-room; the accidental appearance of the gamekeeper with the requisite key in his possession, having enabled them to return to the house some time before. The alarm which they were beginning to entertain on Isabel's account, was scarcely dispelled by the sight of her pale and frightened countenance, and Mr. Mortimer was quickly called upon for a recital of their adventure. "Do not let this affair disturb your rest, Miss Isabel," he said, good humouredly, after he had concluded his account; "I assure you I am very much afraid that Sir Arthur's family have more cause to stand in awe of his Majesty's revenue officers than of the smugglers."

Sir Arthur smiled as Mr. Mortimer spoke, but then gravely replied, "While I plead

guilty, my good sir, to wilful blindness, as to some of the proceedings of these men, I must say, in my own defence, that I am too well aware of the demoralising influence of the practice upon the peasantry to allow any of my household to lend it the slightest encouragement. I cannot, indeed, prosecute the smugglers :— they have looked on the sea as their domain since the Wentworths first held lands here. The trade appears to descend as a matter of course from father to son ; and their poverty leads them the more excuseably to embrace it as the means of maintaining their families. My invincible repugnance on this head has caused me always to avoid undertaking the duties of a county magistrate."

"I could almost forgive these men their lawless course of life, although I believe the motives for its adoption to be less pardonable than those Sir Arthur has suggested, in consideration of their boldness, ready wit, and undeviating gratitude to those who refuse to inform against

them," remarked Walsingham. "Though traces of their having crossed my grounds are constantly discernible, yet even my mother's flower-beds are held sacred from their footsteps; and when I hear their whistle on the shore, or their hurrying tread on moonless nights close to the house, I am rather disposed to regard their vicinity as a protection to my mother, during my occasional absences from home, than as affording any reason for apprehension on her account."

"I remember, several years ago, that I was returning, after nightfall, along the lonely coast road, between Marchwood and Comerford," said Sir Arthur, "when, beneath the shadow of an overhanging rock, my eye caught the glitter of fire arms. As I gained the spot, a man rose slowly from the crouching posture wherein he had awaited the stranger's approach;—another and another followed, and the whole troop, at least twenty in number, defiled along the road before me. 'It is the Baronet from the Court,'

—said one,—'its owners have always been the smuggler's friends.—Good night, Sir Arthur.' At that moment, so romantic was the whole scene, so bold and picturesque the appearance of those who thus termed themselves my friends, that instead of feeling indignant at the suspicion of my want of regard for his Majesty's dues, I almost gloried in the appellation, and could well understand the attraction possessed by a career, offering scenes of such varied and powerful excitement."

"Upon my word, this is a very unfitting conversation to be carried on in my presence," observed Mr. Mortimer. "Were you, Miss Wentworth, ever to find yourself on the wild heath, where the greater number of the smugglers' wretched habitations are to be found, the spectacle would provide you with the best possible antidote to the blameable tenets I have just heard inculcated. When you saw the miserable destitution of the neglected women and children, left almost to starve, while their husbands and

fathers spend in a few hours of selfish indulgence, their ill-earned profits; you would allow the superior mercy of endeavouring by the removal of the hardened and desperate, to afford a possibility of reclaiming the young, in some measure, to habits of industry. You cannot tell the degradation into which one breach of the laws gradually leads them—the deceits which are looked on as praiseworthy—the desperate wickedness that is engendered. Before we wish you good night, I must tell you ladies a capital trick the rascals played some years since, upon the worthy magistrates of Comerford (of course before my time). Incendiary letters were written to them all, threatening upon a certain night to burn down the Town Hall. In terrible alarm, these sagacious gentry summoned the coast guard far and near, to defend the venerable edifice, which no one was dreaming of molesting, and more contraband goods were safely landed that night, than had been imported into Devonshire for years."

Mr. Mortimer, with the other guests, now took his leave; and fatigued with the occurrences of the day, the inmates of the Court shortly afterwards separated for the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

"And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?"

"Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught; in respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now, in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect that it is not in the court, it is tedious."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

During her visit at Wentworth Court, Mrs. Tresham had been quietly using all her influence to effect an object which every day rendered her more desirous of attaining,—namely, that Melicent and Isabel should accompany her on her return to St. Austin's. Sir Arthur, with

whom their gentle guest had gradually become a favourite, was easily induced to second a project likely to afford pleasure to his nieces, and enable them to see the beautiful south-western coast of England; but it was long before Melicent and Isabel could be prevailed upon to leave him, even for a short period, so soon after their arrival in Devonshire. Their uncle, however, saw, or fancied that Isabel looked pale; and Mrs. Tresham persuaded him, that a fresh change of air was desirable for his delicate niece. The approach of the period fixed by Mr. Tresham and Lord Lymington for their return, necessarily obliged Mrs. Tresham to resolve upon her own departure; and her anxiety and unusual exertions were at length rewarded, by finding her friends the companions of the journey which, however dreaded in the anticipation, was now accomplished with perfect facility, when enlivened by their society.

The wide and sandy plains, which within a few miles of the Abbey of St. Austin's, extended

to a considerable distance in every direction, served materially to enhance the effect of the beautiful scenery in its immediate vicinity. The river, which almost bathed the walls of the Abbey, flowed between banks highly fertile and picturesque; and the majestic woods environing the venerable edifice, offered a magnificent contrast to the scarcity of trees prevalent in the neighbouring landscapes. Like most of the ancient monastic dwellings, its site appeared to have been selected with the view of combining all the advantages principally conducive to the comfort and ease of its inmates; game and fish abounded in the woods and river; and a domestic and placid tranquillity held appropriate dominion around a spot destined to be kept sacred from the intrusion of the outer world.

The splendid edifice itself, vast in its dimensions, and unequalled in the beauty of its architecture, had, from the lapse of time, derived all the charms of antiquity, without having been suffered to become gloomy or comfortless. Even

in winter, the evergreens scattered among the loftier growth of wood, must have obviated any cheerlessness of aspect; and while, on the southern and western fronts, the beautiful gardens extended in all their richness of decoration along the banks of the river, thick groves of oak and beech, on the opposite side, reached down to the water's edge, and the ash dipped its branches into the cool stream, there in deep shade, but farther on in its winding course, expanding into more than one miniature lake, where the swan reared its slender throat, and the king-fisher darted along the reedy shore.

The carriage had slowly wound its way beneath the stately avenue, and the travellers, on alighting, had found themselves in an immense entrance hall, with its marble pavement chequered by the faint light striving to penetrate through the painted windows; when, unable to restrain her surprise,—"Can this be the home you have called dull and wearisome?" Melicent almost angrily exclaimed; while Isabel stood by

the side of Mrs. Tresham, wrapt in silent wonder at such perversity of taste. "Is it possible that this beautiful place can be the St. Austin's of which you have all spoken only to express your dislike, and complain of the melancholy pervading a scene which appears to us one of enchantment?"

"My dear, what can you mean?" inquired Mrs. Tresham, half roused from her fatigue. "I told you that it was a very nice place, and what a pretty view there was from the windows; and now you are both with me, I know I shall like it of all things, just as I did dear Wentworth Court."

The precise period when Mr. Tresham and his brother-in-law might be expected was uncertain, as they were dependent upon wind and weather permitting their yacht to gain the nearest port, which was twelve miles from St. Austin's. Mrs. Tresham seemed perfectly free from all anxiety on their account, and was soon established apparently as much to her satisfaction

as ever; while the sisters found ample occupation for the first hours after their arrival at the Abbey, in the contemplation of its splendours, and in marvelling at the changes that had occurred in the destination of the monastic fabric, to bring it into the hands of its present possessors. At a late hour in the evening, they were startled from their several avocations by the sudden appearance of Tresham and Lymington; and, as the former warmly welcomed the Miss Wentworths to St. Austin's, and congratulated his wife on the acquisition she had made to their circle, Melicent thought he looked worthy of such a dwelling; but not long afterwards his usual manner returned, and he appeared again the indifferent and dissatisfied man of the world.

"We cannot sufficiently thank your kind friends for the care they have taken of you, Laura. I never saw you look so well," said her brother, soon after his entrance. "Have you

no intelligence to give us of the excellent Mrs. Lambert and our Comerford associates?"

"Thank Heaven! we saw very little of any of them, except Doctor and Mrs. Lambert, at Wentworth Court," said Mrs. Tresham, affectedly. "The very name of Comerford has been odious to me since that terrible water-party; when, really, what with Mrs. Lambert's talking so much, and hurrying about from one to another—very good-naturedly, of course—only I was tired of seeing her in such perpetual motion; and the deplorable appearance of those conceited Miss Severns, and that tiresome Mrs. Mortimer, I was so overcome, that had I not retreated to my cabin, I must have thrown myself overboard."

"Well, I must say, Laura, I was very sorry for the poor people," said her brother, somewhat reproachfully, though unable to refrain from laughing at the recollection of the scene. "I am sure they bore their misfortune very good-humouredly. The girls were absurd, of

course; and Mrs. Mortimer, I should think, never was anything else in her life; but Mrs. Lambert was so active and useful, and so thoroughly kind and thoughtful concerning everybody but herself, that I do not like to hear you, who must own to having been perfectly useless, and as much frightened as even Mrs. Mortimer, presume to find any fault."

"I assure you, Frank, I did not mean to be ill-natured. I was quite surprised at Mrs. Lambert's being able to do so much good; but what could I have done? I sent Celestine to them, you know."

"A most efficient aid!" said Tresham, laughing. "Unfortunately they did not, at that moment, require their hair to be dressed in the last Parisian mode. However, I perfectly agree with you in thinking that you were incapable of affording any assistance, and would have been much in the way had you attempted it. Here is a letter from Lindesay, Lymington. He is still at Chudleigh's, and says not a word of

moving. I suspect our doughty brother must have met with some unlooked-for attraction, within the last few weeks, to soften his stern resolves."

"I dare say it is only that he does not particularly wish to come here," remarked his wife, languidly. "I don't think he seemed at all to like being with us at Comerford; and, no doubt, he fancies St. Austin's would be a great deal worse. You know he went away once before in a hurry; when I dare say if he had staid we should have grown used to him, and been very comfortable."

When the sisters retired for the night, the interior of the Abbey wore a very different appearance from that of the less antiquated residence of Marchwood, where they had once been located. Through no desolate chambers had they now to pass; the hand of wealth, guided by refined and correct taste, had been exerted in dispelling all vestiges of gloom, without impairing the venerable grandeur appropriate to

the fabric ; and the suite of apartments assigned to the Miss Wentworths, though spacious in their dimensions, and perfectly consistent in all their details, were furnished with every superfluity that could be desired by the most capricious fine lady. Melicent and Isabel fell asleep before they had recovered from their surprise that the owners of such a dwelling should ever wish for change of scene—ever weary of such luxurious magnificence.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Ma foi, l'homme est bâti d'une etrange façon,
Il ne sait bien souvent s'il est chair ou poisson.
Entraîné d'une humeur inquiete, inégale,
Il court sans savoir où, retourne sur ses pas,
Rejette ce qu'il a, cherche ce qu'il n'a pas."

VALINCOUR.

On the third morning after their arrival at the abbey, its inmates appeared inclined to adopt occupations tending to disperse them more than was customary. Tresham ordered his horses immediately after breakfast, having business to transact with his law agent in the neighbouring town; and Lymington, with some difficulty, succeeded in persuading his sister to trust herself

to his careful driving, and allow him to show her and Isabel some of the beauties of the neighbourhood.

The extreme heat of the weather had induced Melicent to plead a violent headache, as an excuse for not accompanying them; and Mrs. Tresham, declaring compassion for her malady to be out of the question, since it led to so enviable a result, at length suffered her impatient brother to persuade her away.

The soft air that came across the river to the open and shaded window, at which Melicent was reclining, soon wrought a beneficial effect upon her;—the forest life and pictures, with the quiet moralizing of "As you like it," had never before been so enchanting as now, when they seemed in perfect unison with the scene; and Melicent lingered over them till the afternoon breeze blew more and more refreshingly, and the long shadows of the beech trees fell right across the water, eclipsing, by their green reflections, the bright rays that had previously

been sparkling there. Melicent felt herself irresistibly called forth; and slowly and admiringly she walked beneath the spreading boughs of the avenue, and across the beautiful park, towards a spot she had before selected as that whence to sketch the abbey. The progress made in her work when there, was, however, far from rapid, —there was too much to be contemplated and admired before even commencing; the delicious repose around, seemed to induce inactivity;— and, chiding herself for her idleness, she had just began to take interest in her own performance, when she perceived Mr. Tresham advancing towards her. He was reading so intently as not to notice who was near him until she spoke, when he closed his book, and approached her.

"How is it that I see you here, Miss Wentworth? I was told that Mrs. Tresham had driven out, and concluded that you had accompanied her."

Melicent's answer was coupled with a remark on the subject of his studies, for she was now

aware that he held the same volume of Shakespeare which had before occupied herself. "I did not know, Mr. Tresham," she said, "that you could be so much engrossed by poetry; but certainly no one ought to be insensible to its charms who is surrounded by scenes like these. I have read and gazed to-day, until the fascinations of nature and poesy were blended into one, and I scarcely knew, when I raised my eyes from the page, whether the trees, the dappled deer, the running brooks were really before me, or whether the magic of fancy were not transporting me to a visionary Forest of Ardennes."

"On you, Miss Wentworth, beauty, whether ideal or picturesque, is in no danger of being thrown away; and for such as you alone, the poet should write, and scenes like this exist. Would that I could claim a congeniality of mind with you! But, alas! if the truth must out, I have not had a volume of Shakespeare in my hand since my school-boy days, till now, when, finding the saloon deserted, I accidentally

lifted this from the table, and so fell a victim to its strange sorceries,—pleasant ones, it must be owned, like the wild life pourtrayed here, and recalling the dreams of one's boyhood, respecting the supreme felicity of some sylvan solitude,

"'More free from peril than the envious court.'

What say you to this, Miss Wentworth? Do not the banished prince and his followers lose their romance in your eyes, when you find them abandoning their green wood to return to that society which had already treated them so vilely?"

"Their romance, perhaps, in some measure, but certainly not their interest. There were so many reasons why the Duke's resumption of his state was a duty to his subjects and himself, that, his pleasant summer over, I am glad to send him back to his palace."

"You are no advocate, then, of the hermit's cell; yet to whom but to the young and uncor-

rupted could such an abode be endurable? Doubtless most of the anchorites of old were deeply indebted to their faith in the efficacy of fast and scourge; since, without such wholesome pastime, what worse purgatory could be incurred than the obligation to meditate unceasingly upon a past vicious career? Retirement may have charms in the dreams of the poet, or to purity and holiness; but must be shunned as the direst of penances by the man of the world, who has, probably, only past follies for his most agreeable subjects for reflection."

Tresham paused; and for some moments Melicent, too, remained silent, while her companion stood musing by her side. At length, looking up from her work, she said; "This is your first visit of any duration, I am told by Mrs. Tresham, to St. Austin's, since your marriage. Will not its beauties induce you to make it, henceforward, more frequently your residence?"

"Will you teach me, Miss Wentworth, the

secret of existence, at St. Austin's or elsewhere, without change or excitement? A few weeks ago, three days spent here, unbroken by novelty, were almost sufficient to destroy me; and now, I know not how soon all will again become distasteful, and I shall quit it once more in search of a change, which, when gained, will pall as speedily. Yet, believe me, I value the old Abbey, though not as it deserves; and there is not a stone or a tree belonging to it, to which when away I do not revert with affection, though its sight may often serve as too poignant a reproach."

"Surely your complaint carries with it its own remedy. If such are your feelings, cannot the master of St. Austin's devise for himself sufficient occupation and interest in its vicinity without imitating the seclusion of its former monastic inhabitants, or any necessity that he should, in unprofitable moralising,

"'Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time?'

"It might be as you say, Miss Wentworth, were the master of St. Austin's one yet capable of finding in scenes like these the wholesome interest and employment with which they are redolent to healthful and youthful feelings such as yours. Even now, I believe, I might be a happier if a poorer man. He who labours for his support has his object, but what is mine? The idle waste of the wealth that in other hands might diffuse blessings—the thankless abuse of the gifts of Providence to one so undeserving!"

"Oh! no, no! you condemn yourself too harshly;—you could not speak and think thus if the power to act aright had indeed deserted you."

"You know not the deadening influence of a life like mine, Miss Wentworth, upon every ardent or praiseworthy impulse. From a boy spoiled and indulged, I was then thrown upon the world as my own master; and the first check I can recollect opposing itself to my course of folly and extravagance was when I discovered

myself to be involved in debt, and even my paternal estate mortgaged to its fullest value. Then, in the bitter mortification of that hour, might my good angel have interfered, and prompted me by vigorous self-exertion to retrieve my fallen fortunes. An easier mode of extrication presented itself:—I married, and had scarcely thus forfeited the chance that a loved hand might yet have guided me from the path of error, when the death of a distant relative suddenly made me the possessor of wealth more than sufficient to have cleared off all my embarrassments. For a second time I gave the rein to my mad humour, and took refuge from reflection in dissipation; until every better feeling was repressed and blighted, and neither energy nor temper remained to avail me in the attempt at reform you would vainly counsel."

"I cannot yield so readily," replied Melicent, "while you do not prove your own assertions. It may possibly be as you say, that your mind now requires stronger excitement than attends

on simple every-day pleasures. But why continue thus fruitlessly to make pleasure your aim, when existence opens so many elevated duties? Can the owner of these almost princely domains look round in vain for an object capable of interesting even his wayward mind? Have you not hundreds deriving support from the employment you afford? and would not the improvement of your estates, the welfare of your tenantry, repay the partial sacrifice of your time and attention? Your sphere of action might be a wide one; and might include, if you willed it, more public avocations. Can you doubt that the happiness you conferred on others would in time revert on yourself?

"Were every woman like you, Miss Wentworth, ardent and enthusiastic in the cause of good, such a project might sound less impracticable than now. But were I to tell my wife that it was my intention to reside in future on my own estate, enact the county magistrate, and attend turnpike and vestry-meetings; while she,

on her part, played the Lady Bountiful of the parish, she would most excuseably deem this one of the many short-lived caprices by which I have before now been actuated; and the philanthropic design would vanish before her ridicule, as quickly as will, in all probability, my moralising mood of to-day."

"You have, at all events, no reason to doubt Mrs. Tresham's willing assent to whatever may promote your satisfaction. Besides, are you sure that you quite know your wife, or that she does not possess powers and feelings that have long lain dormant, and which it remains for you to elicit? Is not this a worthy object? Speak to her as you have spoken to me;—explain to her your motives, your wishes;—and rely upon it, you will be rewarded by the discovery of qualities beyond even the gentleness and amiability that are always apparent in her."

"I can scarcely doubt it when she has secured a friend like Miss Wentworth. Now, however, how shall I apologise for having so long detained

and wearied you;—how express my gratitude for the patience wherewith you have listened to my captious self-reproaches?"

"Nay, rather let me apologise for the free scope I have been tempted to give to my sex's propensity for lecturing. My humour for grave moralising, as I believe you know, is not more lasting than your own."

"Stay yet a moment before you enter the house, and suffer me to assure you that your words shall not, if possible, be thrown away;—that they have roused a spirit long unfelt, which would persuade me that he cannot be wholly incorrigible whom Miss Wentworth has honoured with her kind interest;—whom she has considered not too utterly unlike her noble and generous self, to be capable of sympathising with the sentiments I have this day listened to from her lips."

CHAPTER XV.

"A silly man, in simple weeds forworn,
And soiled with dust of the long dryed way;
His sandals were with toilsome travel torn,
And face all tanned with scorching sunny ray,
As he had travelled many a summer's day,
Through boiling sands of Araby and Ind;
And in his hand a Jacob's staff to stay
His weary limbs upon; and eke behind,
His scrip did hang, in which his needments he did bind."

SPENSER'S FAERY QUEEN.

THE arrival of Mr. Stanley at St. Austin's that evening, occurred opportunely to prevent Mrs. Tresham from failing in her resolution to encounter the fatigues of an excursion to Penzance and its neighbourhood, in the fulfilment of her promise to Sir Arthur, that his nieces should be

shown as many as possible of the beauties of Cornwall, during their visit. Whatever had been her recent misgivings on the subject, she now became comparatively at ease respecting the meditated undertaking, since, enlivened by the society of the Miss Wentworths, and with one so attentive and useful as Mr. Stanley, to occupy the fourth seat in her carriage, the drive could scarcely prove less than pleasant.

These sanguine expectations appeared likely to meet with some disappointment, when, leaving the banks of the river, and the cool shade of the woods, the road they were destined to pursue continued to lie for many miles across bare and treeless commons, where the sole objects presenting themselves to the sight, were the rude huts and machines of the mining stations, and the stone enclosures, bordering the road in the few spots where vain attempts had been made at cultivation. Mrs. Tresham sank back in despair—Stanley's genius seemed to desert him in the emergency,—Mr. Tresham rode

rapidly forwards, to escape as fast as possible from the glare of the mid-day sun upon the white and burning soil; and silence and fatigue crept over the whole party.

It was impossible, however, for the most indolent or apathetic, not to be alive to the beautiful transition of scene, as, after descending a steep hill, they entered one of the sequestered villages, varying the monotony of the Cornish wastes. Rocks covered with ivy, and creeping plants, replaced the stone walls on either hand,—springs gushed from the granite, and clear brooks ran down beside the narrow road; while sheltered by lofty trees, the rough, but picturesque cottages of the hamlet, though framed only of blocks of granite laid loosely on each other, and admitting the wind and rain through their apertures, looked far more inviting in the summer noon, than the white-washed walls and slated roofs of the dwellings they had passed, belonging to the miners. Beneath the shade of a widely branching ash, stood the village inn;

and while Mrs. Tresham remained contentedly waiting, until the horses should be rested, Melicent and Isabel walked on to explore the green and tempting-looking lanes beyond. Hastening to assume a place by the side of the latter, Lord Lymington began to reproach her for having as yet given him no detailed account of their late proceedings at Wentworth Court, some of which he had gathered from his sister to have been of a highly romantic nature. "No wonder that you have learned to look with indifference upon common-place individuals like myself, who have never had the glory of defending you in a predicament of similar peril. What could be more appropriate and impressive, than that twilight beach?—the landing of a pirate crew,—shots resounding through the air,—and the gallant Mortimer leading on his veterans, while the stately Knight of Marchwood was only restrained by the terrors of his interesting charge, from joining in the deadly contest? I trust, nevertheless, that these animating scenes have not

wholly dispelled your interest in your absent cousin?"

"What could make you think of him then?" said Isabel, blushing; "I am glad you did, however, for I have been wishing to speak to you about him. My uncle has now revealed to us the nature of his offences, and he certainly seems to have been very much to blame; I trust, though, that he will be able to overcome this unfortunate passion."

"Unfortunate passion!—for whom?"

"For the daughter of one of my uncle's tenants, as he told us; Sir Arthur was naturally much distressed about it; but he soon repented his severity, and would very soon, I am sure, have forgiven Mr. Wentworth, had he not unadvisedly engaged in this expedition to Spain, which coincides, I suppose, with the political principles that most displease my uncle. Now, indeed, I do not know whether it will ever be possible to bring Sir Arthur to forgive him. You cannot think how much he was agitated, when I mentioned his name."

"You had then sufficient courage?—that was right, and like yourself. Do not fear,—all will go well in time. I have reason to believe, that Maximilian has seen enough of the fruits of liberal principles, and that he will henceforth very probably espouse Sir Arthur's side of the question. We shall have him in England, I trust, ere long; and then we will all exert ourselves to effect this most desirable reconciliation."

They had now regained the carriage, into which Isabel was assisted by Lord Lymington, who then retreated to his own; and in a few moments, having left behind the pretty sheltered village, they were traversing another dreary common. Isabel's thoughts soon wandered from the present scene, to the subject of their late conversation. Lord Lymington's confidence in the speedy termination of her cousin's exile, had re-awakened all her own hopes and surmises respecting this unknown relative; and utterly unconscious of what was passing among her

companions, she busied herself in assigning to him, by turns, the outward form and semblance of every favourite hero of romance, and in regretting that she had not more minutely questioned his friend, as to the probable period of his return to England.

The sun was gradually declining as they entered the narrow streets of the straggling and ill-built town of Marazion, and slowly crossed the rough causeway, affording, at low water, a communication between the shore and St. Michael's Mount. The ascent was too precipitous to be attempted otherwise than on foot; and, after gaining the stone balcony encircling the isolated dwelling of the St. Aubyns, Mrs. Tresham's fatigue induced her to decline accompanying the more adventurous of the party in quest of a still finer prospect from the summit of the old tower. The Miss Wentworths almost repented not having imitated her prudence when they found themselves engaged in ascending, in total darkness, a staircase of at least sixty broken

and mouldering steps. About half way in their progress, their difficulties were increased by their being deprived of the faint beam of light which was beginning to reach them through the narrow trap-door at the top, by the interposition of some individual, whose descent, if continued, must infallibly oblige them to retreat the whole way down the steep ladder. The stranger, unconscious of their vicinity, was unconcernedly humming an air to himself; but, when warned by Lord Lymington of the impossibility of the ladies' passing him, he politely retreated from the narrow stair, and having at length attained the summit, the party were, for the first few moments, wholly engrossed by the contemplation of the magnificent view from the battlements.

"What a strange looking man!—Where can Lord Lymington have become acquainted with him?" whispered Isabel to Tresham, as, to their great surprise, the moment he obtained a sight of the features of their friend of the tower stair, Lymington hastened towards him, and

after cordially shaking hands, entered into conversation with him in the most animated manner.

The appearance of the individual in question, as they stood thus apart from the others, certainly formed a whimsical contrast to that of the young nobleman. His coat, of that peculiar cut distinguishing the ungraceful genus of duck-hunters, was, like the rest of his garments, plentifully besprinkled with dust; his head was buried in a large, coarse, straw hat; and in his hand he carried a heavy and clumsy-looking walking-stick.

"Lymington does seem to have the grace to be amused at the extraordinary appearance of the friend whom he assuredly meditates inflicting upon us;—thank heaven, we are on St. Michael's Mount, and not in a civilised land!" exclaimed Tresham, as he saw Lymington look more than once towards the place where they waited impatiently for the conclusion of his colloquy, and then deliberately cross the intervening space,

and stand with his unabashed companion before the wondering group. His own gravity seemed again threatening to desert him, as he watched the expression of their countenances, while he formally presented the stranger as Mr. Hopkinson, and added that he had at last been fortunate enough to obtain a companion for the drive, his friend having accepted a seat in his phaeton as far as Penzance, where, like themselves, he was going to remain for a day or two.

"It is a piece of good luck which one never could expect, to find a friend able to give one a lift on the top of St. Michael's Mount!" facetiously observed his new associate, after a polite bow to the party. "I should propose inveigling one of the ladies to accompany us; only, since it seems that your lordship has already failed, I suppose I should stand no chance."

The Miss Wentworths proving inflexible in their determination to remain with Mrs. Tresham, it was with much amusement that they saw the owner of the straw hat and duck-hunter,

take his seat by the side of Lord Lymington. "I have obtained some information respecting this strange accession to our party," said Tresham, riding up to the carriage. "Lymington tells me that his friend is the Inspector of the mines for this district; but where he originally picked him up, or what he intends now to get out of him, is quite beyond my comprehension."

"What can the creature have to say, that is so entertaining?" said his wife, languidly. "See how amused Frank is—and they are looking back at us and laughing!—How very absurd!—Perhaps they are quizzing us!"

Before long, the beautiful environs and bay of Penzance came in sight; and as they alighted at the Hotel, Mr. Tresham's request that he would join their party at dinner, was willingly acceded to by their new acquaintance, the Inspector; while Lymington availed himself of the opportunity to whisper to Isabel, "My friend's appearance, I must acknowledge to be against him; but my confidence in your good taste, assures

me that you will appreciate him in time, and he already admires you exceedingly."

With a disdainful smile at the idea of such an individual's presuming to admire her, Isabel followed Mrs. Tresham and her sister, to remove their bonnets and shawls in preparation for dinner.

"I should like to be civil to Frank's acquaintance, were it possible!—Perhaps the creature may not look so odious when he is properly dressed for dinner," said Mrs. Tresham, as they returned to the sitting-room. The brief space allotted for the toilette, had certainly been made the most of by Mr. Hopkinson—the dust had vanished from his garments, and some articles of his apparel bore traces even of pretensions to finery, that harmonised but indifferently with the rest of his costume. He was talking very fast with Lymington and Tresham, whose manner towards him evidently began to partake of a considerable degree of cordiality. He assigned to their new guest the task of conducting Mrs.

Tresham to the dinner table, and gravely observed to the Miss Wentworths:—

"Lymington was right—his friend improves wonderfully on acquaintance. He is a man, too, of great local importance and respectability, and I hope that you will be civil to him."

Silently wondering in what this strange fascination could consist, the Miss Wentworths took their places at the table, while Mr. Hopkinson, whose manner, however homely, was perfectly easy and unabashed, continued to question Mrs. Tresham concerning the route she had pursued that morning.

"Coming across our fine mining country, Mrs. Tresham, it is surprising to me that you should not have visited one of the stations, which being a peculiar feature here, and the great source of profit, generally prove a vast attraction to strangers. As it is, I trust I may have the pleasure of attending you and these young ladies in your descent of one of the mines. Everything is arranged so comfortably as not to alarm the

most timid; and I shall be proud to afford the party the benefit of my experience in these matters. There's the fine mine of St. Just now in the market; perhaps we may tempt you to become a purchaser, Mr. Tresham, when you thoroughly understand the whole thing."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Mrs. Tresham. "I do not feel at all disposed to exchange St. Austin's for a residence on one of your terrible commons, Mr. Hopkinson."

"Why, I fear there is not much chance of establishing anything of the kind in the immediate neighbourhood of your present abode, but there is no saying. Tin has lately been met with in parts of the country where no one would have dreamed of looking for it. A friend of mine, who possesses an estate in one of the best wooded parts of the country, has lately discovered a fine vein of ore running right through his lawn; and the value of his property is now more than doubled by the working of one of the most profitable tin-mines in Cornwall."

"It certainly might be a most lucrative thing," said Tresham, gravely; "and the superintendence of the workmen would be a pleasant occupation for an idle man like me."

"Are there many visitors at Penzance this summer, Mr. Hopkinson?" asked Mrs. Tresham, in despair at the turn the conversation had taken, and at the prospect of Tresham and herself having to superintend, by way of amusement, the working of a tin-mine at St. Austin's.

"Indeed, ma'am, we consider that there is at present an unusual influx of fashionable company to our Cornish Madeira, as we call this favoured spot. I noticed here yesterday, among others of less note, Lord and Lady Pentonville, and her ladyship's brother, Sir Andrew Myers, whom you may probably have encountered in the London circles of *haut-ton*."

"Whatever might be the case elsewhere, at Penzance they will certainly be most amusing acquaintance, and I shall make a point of finding them out," remarked Tresham.

"Not that overpowering Lord Pentonville!—You surely will not bring him here?" exclaimed his wife. "Sir Andrew is infinitely more endurable, since he never speaks intelligibly, and is quite satisfied with a bow or a smile in answer."

"The worst of the family by far," said her brother, "is that absurd Lady Pentonville, who because an old fool took a fancy to her or her fifteen thousand pounds, and saved her at forty from single blessedness, now considers herself a beauty, and assumes so many airs and graces, that I have scarcely patience to remain in the same room with her. And then her pretended affection for her idiot of a brother—when every one knows that she and Lord Pentonville are doing all they can to kill him, for the sake of his large fortune, which would doubtless be very acceptable."

"Sir Andrew looks very ill, poor gentleman—I don't think he 'll trouble them long!" remarked Mr. Hopkinson. "Pray Miss Wentworth," he exclaimed, suddenly addressing Melicent; "don't

you live at Comerford? I should'nt wonder if you knew something of my friend Walsingham."

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Walsingham, of Marchwood?" enquired Melicent, in return, looking up in astonishment that the fascinations of Mr. Hopkinson should have extended to the reserved Mr. Walsingham, and imagining the horror with which such familiarity was likely to inspire him.

"Know him?—to be sure I do!—we were at school together—rather a sulky fellow he used to be, but we got on very well—he fagged at my lessons, while I stole apples and pears for him. Stupid old place, Marchwood!—and as for his mother, I never could endure her—she was so amazingly proud."

"Not a favourable account of your knight!" whispered Lymington to Isabel. "Hopkinson," he exclaimed, raising his voice, "where did you light upon that exquisite waistcoat?"

"Oh! I got it from Tuckwiggin, the best tailor in Launceston. It's one of the newest

patterns, he assures me—quite what's worn in town."

"I saw Count d'Orsay in one very like it, the day before I left London," remarked Tresham. "Talking of dress, however, I am determined, Lymington, not to go any farther without getting a common straw hat—it would be so much more sensible and useful. One like yours, Mr. Hopkinson, I mean—large, and shading the face."

"You are quite right, Mr. Tresham; they are the pleasantest summer wear imaginable. I never put on anything else myself, especially when I am in the hot mining districts."

"That man will be the ruin of Tresham," murmured his wife pathetically to her neighbour Mr. Stanley. "Really, what with Tresham's whim about mining, and that odious straw hat, I am frightened to death what he may put into his head next! Miss Wentworth, shall we retire to the next room?"

Within an hour afterwards, the whole party,

having left the hotel for an evening walk, were directing their steps towards the sea shore. The sands presented a gay scene; for all the visitors, in search of pleasure or health, were abroad to enjoy the cool air after the sultry day.

"Do come away!—there are those dreadful Pentonvilles," said Mrs. Tresham; her husband, however, was determined to recognise them, and she was forced to submit.

"My dear Mrs. Tresham, what an unexpected pleasure! and looking so charmingly well! How delightful this is—to meet one's friends in this *terre inconnue!*"

Lady Pentonville's languishing tones were speedily overpowered by her Lord's superior energy of voice and manner.

"Who ever expected to see you here?—ha, ha, ha! Hope you're not come for Mrs. T.'s health?—ha, ha! Very dull place this; but we were obliged to come on Sir Andrew's account,—ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope you are not worse than usual, Sir Andrew?" asked Mrs. Tresham, considerately.

"Why, on the whole, Madam, the genial air of this salubrious spot, hum—m—m—that is, I mean, the heat has been so very intolerable since we came here, that—hum——." The rest of Sir Andrew's speech was unintelligible.

"Oh! Sir Andrew's wonderfully better!" said his brother-in-law, for once, without laughing. "He was almost at death's door—ha, ha, ha!—not long before we left town—ha, ha!—given over by all his physicians—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

An introduction of Lord and Lady Pentonville to the Miss Wentworths now took place, amidst sundry hearty laughs from his Lordship, and as many courtesies and grimaces from his fair helpmate. Tresham next, to his wife's consternation, begged they would accompany them back to the hotel to tea, an invitation which was readily accepted.

"Very weak tea for Sir Andrew, if you

please, Miss Wentworth; and the merest *soupçon* of sugar! His poor nerves cannot stand the slightest trial," said his attentive sister, watching the composition of the Chinese beverage. Here Sir Andrew said something quite incomprehensible, accompanied by a low bow to the fair tea maker. "Oh! do not mind him. He says he likes it sweet; but it is the worst thing possible for him—is it not, Lord P.?"

Poor Sir Andrew resignedly drank his wholesome potion, while his sister continued in a whisper to Mrs. Tresham—

"Don't you think poor Sir Andrew looks terribly ill? He had a dreadful seizure about six weeks since, and we quite thought it impossible that he should ever recover;—but he has a wonderful constitution! So when he was a little better, and beginning to rally, we thought a change might be beneficial, and brought him down here—all this way, with the greatest possible expedition—in the hope of doing him good."

"I trust that you have succeeded. Sir Andrew does not look very ill at present; and, therefore, the change must, as you say, have proved salutary."

"I am surprised to hear you say so—everybody thinks poor Sir Andrew so very much altered for the worse since his last seizure. But only think how mortifying—after all our trouble we found that we had made a complete mistake; and that we ought to have taken my poor brother to a more bracing climate, instead of this very relaxing one! So now we mean to go away from this almost immediately, since the heat is quite destroying him. It is unfortunate that he has such a dislike to moving about, and cannot be persuaded how necessary it is for him. However, our arrangements being now made for leaving Penzance in a day or two, we have fixed on Scarborough as our next resource. The trouble is nothing, if we can but give relief to the poor sufferer."

"Surely your brother will find the journey a

very long one, since he dislikes moving so much," said Mrs. Tresham, quite moved with compassion for the luckless fate of poor Sir Andrew.

"Ah! but then it is such a very fine healthy place—such a pure bracing air! I am glad it is likely to suit him so well, because Lord P. and myself have several visits to pay at the present time in that neighbourhood, which will now come in most conveniently."

"Sir Andrew hasn't a chance in my opinion—his memory's quite gone—ha, ha!—and it's nonsense expecting him to last much longer," said Lord Pentonville, in a suppressed tone, on the other side of Mrs. Tresham. "Poor fellow! he's such a constant sufferer, that his death will be quite a happy release—ha, ha!—and as he's wealthy beyond description—ha, ha!—and has no other near relative, Letty will no doubt come in for a capital fortune, if he properly considers her kindness and attention—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Sir Andrew, meanwhile, had seated himself by the side of Isabel, and was endeavouring to entertain her in his usual luminous manner.

"There is a great deal very well worth seeing here, Miss Isabel;—the mines, for instance, are in my opinion, hum—very stupid and uninteresting, hum—and nothing can be more dreary than the greater part of the county, hum——"

"Were you speaking of the mines, sir?" inquired Mr. Hopkinson, who had been rather silent since the late addition to the party. "If you wish it, I can explain the whole thing in the most clear and forcible manner."

"Thank you, Sir; but I have visited the mines, and shall have the pleasure of detailing the process to the young lady. You must understand, in the first place, that the ore is, hum——" Isabel could not catch the end of the sentence. "This we observed, and thought it very curious; and then they took it to the, hum——" Here the speaker became again un-

intelligible. "And positively while we stood looking at it, hum—m——"

"My dear Sir Andrew! recollect that open window—how extremely imprudent in you! Pray come and sit on this side of the room—Mrs. Tresham will give you a place on the sofa, and you will find yourself much more comfortable!" exclaimed Lady Pentonville, anxious to remove her brother from his dangerous vicinity to the beautiful Isabel, who was thus deprived of the conclusion of his instructive description of the process of working the mines.

"Have you any engagement for to-morrow?" inquired Tresham; "or shall we form a party to visit the Land's End, and the Loggin Rock, with the other wonders I see recommended by our guide-books? Mr. Hopkinson, I hope you will accompany us?"

"I shall be very glad to join in anything that is agreeable to you all; and perhaps I may be of use, as you are strangers, and liable to be imposed on."

"Oh! we shall be very happy, sha'n't we, Letty?—ha, ha!—She's up to anything, just as young as ever;—ha, ha, ha!—as strong as a horse—ha, ha!"

"Heavens, Lord P.! what do you mean? I am sure I wish your account of me were true; but I am the poorest creature! never well two days together; and now, though nothing could give me greater pleasure than to make one of so delightful a party, yet I really am afraid of proving perfectly unequal to encounter the fatigue in one of the wretched vehicles of the country."

A look from Tresham forced his wife to be polite. "You can certainly have a seat in my carriage, Lady Pentonville, if you prefer it."

"Oh! that will be quite enchanting? Lord P. and Sir Andrew can get a carriage somewhere; for ours is too heavy for these roads, and we came down too much in a hurry to travel with our own horses. *Mille remercimens*, dear Mrs. T., for your friendly consideration, and my

consequent exemption, for to-morrow at least, from the thousand inconveniences from the sun and the dust to which my poor complexion has been exposed since our arrival here. How enviable is the *beau teint* of yourself and your fair friends —so delicate, and yet apparently impervious to the attacks of the scorching luminary !"

CHAPTER XIV.

"I am sprighted with a fool,
Frighted, and angered worse!"

CYMBELINE.

"THANK heaven, I have succeeded at last!" exclaimed Lymington, as in consequence of the change of arrangements induced by the accession of Lady Pentonville to their party, he had the satisfaction of handing Isabel into his phaeton, while Mr. Hopkinson quietly took his place in the back seat. "I have a thousand things to say, but we will wait till this pretty town, and every thing interesting is left behind, and we find ourselves upon one of those delightful com-

mons, with nothing in sight to distract the attention."

The scene they were passing, was certainly beautiful enough to deserve the survey which Isabel was bestowing on it. Beyond the pleasant and scattered cottages, with their verandahs gay with creepers and flowering plants, the morning sun was shedding floods of light upon the waters, encircling St. Michael's Mount, without having as yet dispelled thence the veil of mist which hung around it, and seemed to promise another sultry day. In the more remote distance, gradually fading into indistinct clouds, lay the Lizard Rocks; and on the other hand, gleamed the white sails of a fleet of passing vessels, scarcely less vividly reflected in the waves.

Isabel turned with regret from the enchanting prospect. "I do not believe you ever saw any thing more beautiful than this among the Islands of the Mediterranean."

"This bay is not at all unlike that of Naples,"

replied Lymington; "but more than half of these attractions will vanish in the change effected on those sparkling waters, by the next few hours. The tideless sea knows no such diminution of beauty."

"Neither can you watch from its shores, the ebb and flow of the tide, or walk on the sands, with the waves breaking nearer and nearer to your feet every moment. The constant change makes us enjoy every charm the more. Here, for instance, is one yielding us a scene as lovely as the last."

They were slowly ascending a steep hill, where the road was on both sides bordered by lofty trees, which excluded the bright sunbeams, and overshadowed the rustic dwellings with their tiny gardens, where groups of children were at play, while avenues of equal beauty branched off in every direction. Lord Lymington's desire for an uninteresting locality, appeared unlikely to be gratified during that morning's drive, when every turn of the road

presented some fresh picture of quiet and rural loveliness. Several miles were thus traversed, Mr. Hopkinson joining occasionally in the conversation; when as they entered upon another long ascent, Lymington addressed his companion, after a pause of some duration.—

"I am certain, Miss Wentworth, that you will rejoice in hearing that I have received positive intelligence of Mr. Wentworth's return. His landing with some of his adventurous comrades, was mentioned in yesterday's newspapers: they were said to have had a very tempestuous passage, and to be in a most destitute condition."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the delighted Isabel;—then I will not despair of our effecting a reconciliation. How I long to see him at Wentworth Court."

"That's a happy man you are speaking of, whom the young lady is so delighted at the thought of meeting—you and I, Frank, have no such luck with the ladies!—"

"That odious Mr. Hopkinson!—I had quite forgotten him;" thought Isabel. "What can he mean, by calling Lord Lymington Frank, and by being so disagreeably familiar? Mr. Wentworth, the gentleman of whom we were speaking, Mr. Hopkinson, is my cousin, and nearest relative, though as yet perfectly unknown to me!"

"Those cousins are always in the way!" remarked the facetious Inspector of the mines. "'There can be no harm in dancing with my cousin John, as often as I please'—'It's only cousin Edward!'—and so on, till at last the quiet cousin steps in, and carries off the lady, just when you think the day's your own. I would have you be on your guard against that same cousin of yours, Miss Isabel!"

"Never mind Hopkinson's nonsense, Miss Wentworth; but tell me, whether you have thought of any plan for reconciling Maximilian and Sir Arthur?"

"Why, you are talking of Max Wentworth!"

persisted the incorrigible Hopkinson ;—" he was an odd fellow, if ever there was one ; and much good his notions of liberty and equality have done him."

Isabel's colour rose ; to hear her cousin styled Max Wentworth, and an odd fellow, by so detestable an individual, was too much ; and turning her back still more deliberately upon him, she proceeded to answer Lord Lymington.

" I cannot imagine what we are to do ; if we could contrive a sudden meeting between my uncle and Mr. Wentworth, perhaps the sight of his nephew would disarm Sir Arthur's resentment."

" I fear Maximilian would never be persuaded to make the trial ; his proud and fiery spirit would dread too much the recurrence of the reproaches and sarcasms heaped upon him by Sir Arthur, during their last interview."

" Surely, it could be no degradation for my cousin to acknowledge his error to an aged relative, to whom he is so deeply indebted.

"Miss Isabel is quite right," again remarked Mr. Hopkinson. "My friend Max will have sense enough to know on which side his bread is buttered, and I will answer for his not making any difficulties about asking the old gentleman to forgive him."

Isabel's wrath was every instant encreasing, and most heartily did she wish every jolt of the carriage over the large stones in the road, might precipitate the Inspector down one of his own tin mines. They were now proceeding more rapidly, and she ventured to say, hoping that the increased noise of the wheels would prevent her words from being overheard,

"If Mr. Wentworth will write to my uncle, I will undertake to deliver the letter, and to persuade him to read it."

"Could any one desire a fairer messenger?" said Mr. Hopkinson. "Were I the happy man, I should not know whether I stood on my head or my heels, for joy at the interest you took in me."

"I wish your disagreeable friend would hold his tongue!" whispered Isabel, provoked beyond bearing; "or if he must speak, where his opinion is neither asked nor desired, that it might be with less familiarity."

"Oh, you must not mind Hopkinson!—it is his way. Now, no one is really more concerned about Mr. Wentworth than he is; and when he has an opportunity, he will do any thing in the world to serve him, but it must be in his own odd manner. To tell you the truth," continued Lymington, lowering his voice still more, "I have more faith in what Hopkinson may do towards healing the breach between Maximilian and Sir Arthur, than in any thing else; therefore, pray let us keep friends with him."

To remain perfectly silent was the only mode that Isabel could devise in order to secure the continuance of amicable terms between her tormentor and herself. For a few moments this plan appeared to succeed, but after devoting

the space apparently to cogitation, Mr. Hopkinson exclaimed, in a tone of delight:—

"I have it, Miss Isabel!—we'll get the old gentleman's consent yet, for I see very well what this cousinly regard will end in, and I shall be very glad of it. There are worse fellows in the world than Max, and I won't grudge him his good luck; though, Frank, you and I may think it ought to be 'first come, first served!' But now what will you give me if I find you out a famous plan to come over the old gentleman completely?"

"If you mean Sir Arthur Wentworth, Mr. Hopkinson, I have not the slightest wish or intention to delude my uncle in any way; and was only meditating how to inform him of any favourable change that may have taken place in Mr. Wentworth's opinions. Should all cause for anger prove to be over, Sir Arthur is too just and reasonable not to forgive his nephew immediately; but if he should still regard his

conduct as too reprehensible to allow of his recalling him to Wentworth Court, I shall be quite satisfied that his decision is well founded, and shall certainly not attempt to shake it either by manœuvring or deception."

"See how she blushes!—Conscious, eh Lymington? Capital sign for Max—lucky dog!" whispered the incorrigible Hopkinson to Lymington, in a tone plainly audible to the provoked Isabel, who mentally vowed never to go out in a phaeton, with a person inclined to be facetious in the back seat. By way of a climax, Lymington, convulsed with laughter at the whole scene, now caused his horses nearly to overturn the carriage, by accidentally pulling the wrong rein.

"Upon my soul, Lymington, this is too bad! You have quite frightened Miss Isabel by your clumsy driving. Do let me come and take the reins. This back seat too is very inconvenient for carrying on a conversation."

"Frightened! I shall be in a fever," thought

Isabel, wisely determining not to speak again if she could possibly avoid it. In another moment, however, Mr. Hopkinson was again addressing her. "You have not yet heard my proposal, to which it is impossible you can have any objection, seeing that the trouble lies entirely with me. Now when you and your sister go back to Comerford, I will escort you, and then I can talk Sir Arthur round in no time."

"Go back with Melicent and me to Wentworth Court! I should be sorry to give you such unnecessary trouble, Mr. Hopkinson. I have no doubt that we shall be able to say what is right on the subject when the time comes;—at present, I must confess I am heartily tired of it."

Almost as much offended with Lord Lymington as with Mr. Hopkinson, Isabel leaned back in the carriage, and for some time there was a general silence. Her thoughts reverted to the absent Maximilian—to the anger he would probably have entertained if aware of the liberties taken with her and with his name, by the detes-

table Hopkinson. Gradually, however, forgetting the latter, Isabel had sunk into a profound reverie, when her tormentor, tired of remaining so long silent, began singing in a loud voice, various comical ditties, which never could have been more ill-timed than when they were traversing a frightful common, with the sun beating full upon them, and one at least of his auditors in the worst possible humour. Isabel always disliked comic songs, but they had never before appeared to her so intolerable; and in her despair, she looked forward to the conclusion of the drive for her release, determined that no inducement should prevail with her to return in the same manner.

The ocean, as it might now in truth be called, soon lay stretched before them, and the islands of Scilly were seen, like thin clouds, resting on the surface of the broad Atlantic. Rejoicing at her deliverance from the martyrdom she had been enduring, Isabel sprang from the carriage as soon as it stopped, and, declining Lord Ly-

mington's support, hastened to join the rest of the party. An accidental glance then shewed her Lymington and his extraordinary friend laughing immoderately, and lingering near the carriage until sufficiently composed to follow her; and her displeasure received a fresh increase from the belief that her own conduct had probably afforded the subject for their excessive merriment.

"You'll never believe that we have had a world of difficulty to prevent Sir Andrew from climbing up that Loggin Rock after you, ha, ha, ha!—He'd have broken his neck to a dead certainty,—wouldn't he, Letty? ha, ha, ha,!" exclaimed Lord Pentonville to the more adventurous members of the party, when, glad to repose after their fatigues, they rejoined their less active friends at the spot where refreshments had been spread for them, beneath the shade of the stupendous rocks piled along that part of the coast. Sir Andrew, whose tall figure wore an appearance of robustness in singular opposition to his

cadaverous countenance, having succeeded in placing himself next Isabel, commenced his exertions for her entertainment, without allowing further space for the comments of his affectionate brother-in-law.

"I have been much in mountainous countries, Miss Wentworth, and think I may be able to give you some hints that—hum—for instance it is a very bad plan, when about to attempt one of these alarming descents, to shut your eyes, because—hum—but if you put one foot in—and the other after it—you will find it very easy in that peculiar manner to get down any—hum—m—"

"Have you ever been in Spain, Sir Andrew?" asked Mr. Hopkinson. "Plenty of mountains there, from all accounts, that would make these look like molehills."

"I never was actually in Spain myself, sir, but I was once very intimate with a gentleman who—hum—and really it seems all—and now

particularly when public attention is—and everything in a most unsettled state."

"Unsettled indeed, sir," remarked the talkative Inspector; "and not the kind of place I have any manner of wish to find myself in just now. I have heard a good deal about it lately, from Lymington's particular friend and mine, poor Mr. Wentworth, the cousin of these young ladies, when he was staying with me at my place, Mount Pleasant. Glad enough Max was to get into warm quarters in my snug little box, after his starvation with the Dons. It was well there were no ladies to look at him when he landed, for he cut but a strange figure till I had lent him a suit of my clothes to make him a little respectable."

"By the bye, Hopkinson," said Lymington, while Isabel in silent indignation brooded over the idea of her cousin Maximilian arrayed in Mr. Hopkinson's best duck-hunter—"since you have been at Comerford, did you ever see Max's love, the prettiest lass in Devonshire, Jemima

Gubbins, or some such exalted appellation—a miller's daughter?"

"The worthy Inspector seems to find this rather an unpleasant subject;—some rivalry with the fascinating Mr. Wentworth!" whispered Tresham to Isabel.

"Look, the odious creature is actually blushing!" said his wife, aside to Stanley. "How very ridiculous!—only fancy him in love."

"How can you repeat that absurd story, Lymington?" said Mr. Hopkinson, who had now recovered, in some measure, from his unaccountable confusion. "You are well aware that Sir Arthur's peculiar disposition, good and noble as he is, would cause him to view in a serious light, what in fact was nothing but a mere piece of foolish gallantry. I can testify to Max's having been cured of more dangerous follies by his campaign with the Christinos, and to his coming home fully convinced of the follies of liberalism, and Tory enough to satisfy even Sir Arthur Wentworth."

"I hope that you will give Mr. Wentworth the meeting at St. Austin's, Mr. Hopkinson," said Tresham. "I am expecting him about the time of our return, and if not able to accompany us back, we shall look forward to a speedy visit from you. Our's must not prove the mere acquaintance of a day."

"You do me infinite honour, Mr. Tresham; and may certainly depend upon my availing myself of your polite invitation. I have reasons of my own for wishing especially to witness Mr. Wentworth's arrival;" added the Inspector, with a sagacious glance at Isabel, who had heard the invitation given with as much consternation as Mrs. Tresham, by whom the establishment of the St. Austin Tin Mine was now regarded as a matter of certainty.

"Miss Wentworth, the interesting topic at present in discussion," began Sir Andrew Myers, with great deliberation, and not having perceived any change in the subject of conversation, "renders me desirous of making you thoroughly

understand the nature of the Spanish constitution, and the origin of the—hum—Now you must know there is a law in force in most of the continental kingdoms, called the Saline law, whereby females are—hum—This however, not suiting the views of—occasioned an altercation—hum—Don Carlos, the undoubted—hum—and Mr. Wentworth, will consequently—hum—succeed finally to the throne—and then this great country will—hum—"

What was to become of the luckless Peninsula, was of course utterly unintelligible, owing to Sir Andrew's singular mode of pronunciation.

Isabel's resolution not again to commit herself to the care of Lord Lymington, had already induced her to take an opportunity of entreating Melicent to exchange places with her for the return home. She trusted that Mr. Hopkinson would find no subject to be facetious upon with her sister, yet it was not without many misgivings as to the amiability of her proceeding in thus imposing upon Melicent's imprudent

good nature, that after numerous reproaches from Lymington and his friend for her desertion of them, (a circumstance which Mr. Hopkinson attributed entirely to her alarm at his lordship's bad driving), she took her seat in Mrs. Tresham's carriage. There was pleasure, however, in being relieved from the sound of the obnoxious Inspector's voice. Lady Pentonville quite won her favour by her horror at his extreme vulgarity, and the drive, in comparison with that of the morning, now appeared to her perfectly delightful.

CHAPTER XV.

"Boy, what sign is it when a man of great spirit grows melancholy?"

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

WAKING or sleeping, Isabel seemed to be haunted by the idea of the odious Mr. Hopkinson; and no sooner had she unclosed her eyes upon the following morning, than she joyfully exclaimed,

"Oh, Melicent! what a happy day this will be!—that hateful man said last night that he could not go any farther with us; and, therefore, we shall get rid of him directly after breakfast."

"Do you mean poor Mr. Hopkinson? I cannot think what has made you take so violent a dislike to him. He is certainly very harmless, and so perfectly good-humoured and unpretending."

"Unpretending! I never saw any one so detestable in my life. All night I have been dreaming of that drive in Lord Lymington's phaeton. How could you endure it so patiently?"

"I cannot say that my temper was so severely tried as yours seems to have been; on the contrary, the time passed very pleasantly. Lord Lymington is always agreeable; and although his friend is certainly not very refined, yet he conversed in a sensible and rational manner, and seems to possess considerable information on many subjects. He has been much abroad—in the way of his business, I suppose—and his descriptions, though quaint, are extremely amusing. Altogether he is the kind of person I should never think of disliking on account of a few inoffensive originalities of manner."

"This is worse than all;—to find that he could imagine me one upon whom he could freely exercise his impertinence. Inoffensive and unpretending you call him; while I regard him as the most presumingly familiar individual I ever was unfortunate enough to encounter. What perplexes me most is how he could possibly become thus intimately acquainted with Lord Lymington and Mr. Wentworth."

"That does appear strange; but as he says he was at school with Mr. Walsingham, I should think he must have known them also when a boy, and have been in very inferior society ever since. His accoutrements certainly are the oddest I ever saw; but his countenance is pleasing and intelligent."

"I declare, Melicent, you must have fallen in love with the wretch! Indeed I begin to have faith in the efficacy of love charms and philtres; for it is impossible to doubt that there is some spell at work respecting him. Mr. Tresham and Lord Lymington both profess to entertain

the highest opinion of this extraordinary being; and you assert that he is pleasing and intelligent! Your rising so early this morning is, I suppose, in fulfilment of some engagement made during your agreeable conversation. Heaven forbid that I should interfere with such a project! Pray draw the curtain, and let me go to sleep again; for I mean to be late at breakfast in order to see as little of him as possible."

Having complied with her request, Melicent left the hotel to take a farewell walk along the beach, since they were to leave Penzance soon after breakfast. The freshness of the morning, and the pleasure of treading the cool firm sands close to the sparkling waves, easily induced her to prolong her ramble to a considerable distance from the town. She knew that there was no occasion for haste, as the late habits of Mr. and Mrs. Tresham prevented any expectation of their appearance before an advanced hour of the day; and she was just beginning to think of retracing her steps, when suddenly she per-

ceived advancing towards her a figure, which a second glance was unnecessary to enable her to recognise as that of the wearer of the well-known straw hat and duck-hunter. Not a little amused as she thought of Isabel's accusation, and of the confirmation likely to be afforded to her surmises, should Mr. Hopkinson think it necessary to return with her to the hotel, she awaited his approach, determined not to be rude to one whom she considered so very harmless and insignificant.

"You are, like myself, an early riser, Mr. Hopkinson," she politely observed, on his joining her, and lifting his straw hat in respectful obeisance.

"Yes," he replied, with a graver air than was usual with him; "I did not sleep well last night."

"I am sorry to hear it; an early walk is certainly very refreshing after passing the night uncomfortably."

Mr. Hopkinson continued to walk silently

by her side. Melicent good-naturedly felt quite sorry for the poor man, who seemed so unwell and low-spirited; and determined to talk to him a little, though rather puzzled as to the choice of a topic.

"The bathing here appears to be excellent," she at last remarked. "Pray is the place one of much resort in summer?"

"I really do not know;—I never was here before the other day."

"Indeed!" said his companion, somewhat surprised that he should never have seen a town near which he had resided all his life. "Mount Pleasant, then, is at some distance from Penzance?"

"Yes—no! what was I saying?—that I had never been here before?—How very absurd!"

"What can be the matter with him?" thought Melicent; "he seems very much out of spirits; I will talk of something else. I am sorry that Mr. Tresham has not time to take us to see the mines;—they must be very curious and in-

teresting, and you would have been kind enough to explain it all to us."

"Perhaps it is as well as it is. It is ground I have no desire to go over again; nor have I acquitted myself so satisfactorily of late, as to have any reason to hope that better success should attend my future efforts in that line!"

"Something has gone wrong in his business, poor man!" thought Melicent; and wholly at a loss for consolation, she remained silent, till, to her surprise, he hesitatingly expressed a hope that her sister had not been prevented by fatigue from accompanying her in her walk.

"Can he have been thinking all this time of Isabel, or of his tin mines?" Melicent internally wondered, as, after being reassured on the subject of Isabel's health, he again became taciturn and absent.

"I am very much afraid," he at length began, in the same hesitating manner as before—"I am very much afraid that your sister was offended with me yesterday. I wish Lymington had

given me a hint! However, it was all a jest, and I hope you will have the goodness to tell her so; and how sorry I am that she should have been annoyed."

"Certainly I will tell her so if you wish it; but I am sure Isabel will not think a second time of anything of the sort, Mr. Hopkinson; and, indeed, I have no reason to believe that she feels at all offended," said Melicent, who concluded that Isabel merely disliked the poor man on account of his unintentional faults of manner.

"It was evident that your sister felt seriously displeased," persisted Mr. Hopkinson, in a tone bordering so nearly upon the sentimental, and contrasting so ludicrously with his appearance and ordinary manner, that Melicent with difficulty preserved her gravity. "I would give the world not to have behaved as I did;—particularly when she had been so kind, and shown so much amiability of character. I never intended to go so far; but I was led on by degrees. Had not my spirits been unusually

elated, I never should have forgotten myself so completely."

"Does the man mean that he was intoxicated? or can he possibly have been making love to Isabel? This, then, is the reason of her extreme aversion! I am sure I can no longer wonder at it," thought Melicent; while she quickened her pace, willing to escape from a companionship which was every moment growing more disagreeable. Mr. Hopkinson, however, also walked on faster, and continued;—

"I am glad that you do not think Miss Isabel as much offended with me as I fancied. I should sincerely regret having incurred her dislike."

"I cannot tell what occasion has been afforded my sister for displeasure, Mr. Hopkinson. From what you say, it seems to have been more serious than I supposed; she has not mentioned to me any thing of the offence you acknowledge having given her, and you must know best, whether it is such as she is likely to forgive.

"In case of my having made an unfavourable impression, Miss Wentworth, I trust that it may be, in some measure, effaced before our next meeting; and, in the mean time let me assure you, that there is nothing in the world I should lose with greater reluctance, than the regard and kind sympathy of your sister."

"My sister is not in the habit of bestowing either upon strangers, Mr. Hopkinson. I should imagine, therefore, that you need entertain no apprehension of losing them.."

Her companion looked at her, as if greatly amused by her grave dignity of manner. "We shall see," was his answer, in his ordinary tone of facetiousness. "Things haven't gone on well up to the present, certainly; but young ladies are privileged, you know, to alter their opinions. If Miss Isabel objects to my profession, I shall not scruple to drop it, and become a gentleman at large; so you see, I mean to do every thing in my power to accommodate her, and humour her whims and fancies."

Any reply from Melicent was prevented, by their being met by Lord Lymington, with a summons to breakfast; he, with the rest of the party, having watched their approach from the windows of the hotel. Mr. Hopkinson seemed fully to have regained his usual spirits, and Melicent wondered whether he really had any hope, that by giving up his tin mines, he might win the love of the beautiful Isabel.

On entering the sitting-room, Melicent found added to the party there, Lord and Lady Pentonville, and Sir Andrew Myers, who had called to take leave, previously to their friends' departure. Lord Pentonville's laugh was the first sound that reached Melicent's ear.

"Better late than never!—ha, ha!—Nothing so conducive to health, as walking before breakfast;—ha, ha, ha!—It would do Letty a world of good; but then she has no inducement to get up so early,—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"It has undoubtedly been of service to Miss Wentworth," said Tresham, looking at her ma

liciously. "I would advise every one who studies the art of beauty, to adopt this efficacious plan for becomingly heightening the complexion."

Melicent's gravity wholly gave way, when she saw the expression of countenance worn by Isabel, who, however, remained perfectly silent, as if too much horrified to venture to speak.

"I congratulate you, Hopkinson, on your encreased fascinations," cried Lord Lymington. "Yesterday, you vainly tried to please Miss Isabel Wentworth; but this morning, you have evidently succeeded better with her sister."

"Oh! Miss Wentworth understands me, and so will Miss Isabel in time," returned the Inspector, as he took his place at the table. "We shall all be capital friends yet;—shan't we, Miss Wentworth?—It's a nice morning, and we've had an uncommonly pleasant walk!"

"Very likely!—ha, ha!—I remember when such things were agreeable enough; but the day is gone by with me, for expecting such

favours from young ladies,—ha, ha, ha!—However, I can't sufficiently commend your principle of seizing time by the forelock, Mr. Hopkinson,—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Well then, don't all be plaguing Miss Wentworth, just because she was good enough to take a little airing with me!" said Mr. Hopkinson, considerately. "I declare it has made me feel altogether a different man; I was quite in low spirits this morning, wasn't I, Miss Wentworth?"

While Melicent, at once entertained and provoked, longed to say how fully she now agreed with Isabel in her dislike, Lady Pentonville observed to Mrs. Tresham,

"How thankful I am not to be compelled to remain at Penzance, after the loss of your delightful party! From the first we considered the place *triste*, but now it would be absolutely insupportable;—would it not, Lord P.?"

"Oh, quite unbearable!—ha, ha, ha! What can make you bury yourself down here in Corn-

wall, Mr. Tresham? It will certainly kill Mrs. T. if you make her stop through the winter—ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Indeed I would much rather stay quietly at St. Austin's, now that we have once settled there," said Mrs. Tresham. "I detest moving."

"So do I, madam;" observed Sir Andrew. "Of all things in the world, there is nothing to which I am so averse as travelling, and yet we are always—hum—They say my health requires it, but it seems to me that I am invariably better when—hum—"

"That is what poor Sir Andrew constantly says! He does not in the least know what suits his constitution—does he, Lord P.?"

"Oh no!—he'd be dead in a week if we did not take care of him—ha, ha ha, ha!"

The carriages were now announced, and Mrs. Tresham, whose compassion had been unusually excited for the hapless victim she was leaving to the tender mercies of his interested relations, was now called on by her husband to

hasten her adieus. Sir Andrew politely offered his arm to Isabel, to conduct her down stairs.

"My sister has already expressed the regret we must all experience, Miss Wentworth, at parting with such—hum—I should desire, nevertheless, more distinctly to state my—hum—and hope that at some future time it will be—hum—At present I can only wish you every possible felicity which your—hum—"

Whether Isabel had any prospect at a future period of becoming Lady Myers, she could not tell, but recollecting Mrs. Tresham's definition of a proper answer for Sir Andrew, she smiled and bowed, hoping that he would be perfectly satisfied.

"It's not likely we shall meet again in a hurry—ha, ha, ha!—We are off to Scarborough to-morrow, while you are going to shut yourselves up here in the wilds. You'll certainly never survive it—ha, ha, ha!"

"I am convinced I need not say how much pleasure it will give Lord P. and myself to see

any of your delightful party at Pentonville House, should some fortunate accident bring you into our neighbourhood, when we happen to be at home, though, I am sorry to say, that is but seldom the case, owing to the importunities of our numerous friends and connections, and the constant change necessary for poor Sir Andrew. Adieu! since for the present part we must. We shall, of course, meet in town in the spring."

"I wish you a pleasant journey, ladies and gentlemen;" said Mr. Hopkinson, who stood bowing, with his straw hat in his hand, on the steps at the entrance to the hotel.

"Don't fail us, Hopkinson, at St. Austin's;" said Tresham, mounting his horse.

"Oh, never fear!—I shall be down upon you soon!" returned the facetious Inspector, with a parting wave of his hat, as the carriages drove from the door, and he retreated into the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The beautiful hath vanished, and returns not."
COLERIDGE.

"LET me persuade you, Mrs. Tresham, not to attempt that precipitous descent! *I*, who have seen rocks and caverns enough in my life, will remain to take care of you; while Tresham and Lymington escort the Miss Wentworths on their adventurous pilgrimage to the Cove of the Cornish Saint."

"Indeed I should prefer remaining in the carriage. As Mr. Stanley says, it would tire me to death to go down, and I should not enjoy it in the least. Besides, the sands are wet, and it is raining quite fast."

"*You* will not permit a few drops of rain to deprive you of the object of our tedious drive over the moors, Miss Wentworth?" said Tresham, as he rode up to the carriage; which, for the last two or three hours, had been slowly and painfully dragged by the beautiful horses, to Mrs. Tresham's infinite alarm, along a narrow road, where the wheels had been buried to the axletree in the deep sand. The mist, which had been gathering since their departure from Penzance, was now changing into rain; and, as she looked with dismay at the steep and rugged path conducting to the shore, it was with a sensation of great relief that Mrs. Tresham heard and acceded to Mr. Stanley's welcome proposal. While her husband stood waiting to assist the Miss Wentworths from the carriage, she leaned back with an air of the most determined laziness, saying languidly,—"The thing is impracticable—I really cannot attempt it. How can you wish us to descend that dreadful path in such a tempest?"—And the head of the

barouche having been raised, and every precaution taken to shield her from the damp, she was left to enjoy her quiet *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Stanley.

The route pursued by the rest of the party brought them, in a few moments, to a scene differing not more widely, in its grandeur and desolation, from the fertile country round Penzance, than from the sparkling granite rocks and bright blue ocean of the western coast. Black masses of rock, their summits enwreathed in mist, stood abruptly out upon the white sands, sometimes forming arches and pillars of various kinds, or gloomy caverns like the one dedicated to St. Kynan; where the noise of the neighbouring waters, that in a few hours would flow over their footprints, and the hoarse screaming of the gulls and cormorants they disturbed among the winding recesses, might have terrified more masculine spirits than those of Melicent and Isabel. It may be doubted whether the rapturous description afterwards given by Isabel

made Mrs. Tresham at all repent her preference for the agreeable conversation with Mr. Stanley which their return interrupted. Fortunately, she was not called upon for any farther exertion, or admiration of the country through which they drove, during a day of incessant rain; and it was a welcome sight, even to the most enthusiastic of the travellers, when the turrets of the old Abbey appeared rising among its circling woods.

"After all," exclaimed Isabel, on a yet nearer approach, though the sun was not then irradiating the Gothic casements, or the placid river; "after all, nothing that we have seen is so beautiful as St. Austin's!"

When they were all reassembled after dinner, Mr. Tresham, addressing his brother-in-law, said, "I have had several letters to-day, Lymington, about the approaching election, which is likely to be severely contested. It seems that I am expected to exert myself on the occasion."

"And you will, of course, do so?" replied

Lymington. "Your influence ought to be considerable on this side of the county."

"When I first came here, I should have laughed at the idea of taking any part in a county election; but, latterly, I have thought of remaining more at St. Austin's. I should not wish to be an unpopular man in the neighbourhood; and must, therefore, I suppose, make up my mind to enter more into local proceedings."

"Heavens, Tresham!" exclaimed his wife, "you do not mean that you are going to interfere in an election? What can induce you to trouble yourself with county politics? I hope, at any rate, that you do not expect me to call upon people, or give parties to please them!"

"I assure you," replied her husband, sarcastically, "nothing can be farther from my wishes or intentions than to see you interfere in anything of the sort. I do *not* think that you would be a very efficient person on such an occasion. Were you to invite the county families to St.

Austin's, you would lie on your sofa, and offend them mortally by leaving them to entertain each other;—unless, perhaps, the Miss Wentworths took pity on them. No! if I am to be popular, you had certainly better follow the bent of your own inclination, and be too great an invalid to see any one."

"I am sure I am very glad to hear it," said Mrs. Tresham. "I know I should do it all wrong; and if you have any regard for your own comfort, you will leave them to manage their own affairs."

"No!" answered Tresham, "these are not times for any man to stand neuter. I am myself invited to stand for this division of the county; but that is out of the question—I should hate the bore of the thing as much as you would; but, as far as I can go, I will. I shall be forced, I find, to leave St. Austin's early to-morrow morning, and shall only return in time for a late dinner."

"I think you are perfectly right, Tresham, in

interesting yourself in these affairs, if you mean to reside in the neighbourhood," remarked Lymington. "The life of a country gentleman without politics would be as unendurable as without field sports;—and I wish you, Laura, would join more in society—it would do you good."

"Pray do not think of such a thing, Frank. —it makes me shudder! Nothing is so tiresome as country visiting—to have miles to go to see disagreeable people! I could not endure it. Tresham must do as he pleases; but I will have nothing to do with the good of the county or the neighbourhood."

"Quite right, Mrs. Tresham," said Stanley. "Country visiting is the most lamentable waste of time! You have no choice of acquaintance; —you must be thankful for any one to make up your tedious dinner-parties. It would kill you in a month, I am convinced. Then no words are too strong to express the horrors of electioneering!—and, after all, people are never

satisfied—you have done too much or too little. I congratulate you on your wise resolution of keeping clear of it altogether."

"Pray do not let us mention the word again! Isabel will sing to us, and banish the recollection of anything so overpowering;" and while Isabel complied with her request, Mrs. Tresham leaned indolently back upon her sofa, in happy unconsciousness that she had vexed and annoyed her husband and brother; and, before the song was ended, she had totally forgotten the whole conversation. Mr. Tresham, however, had been quite in earnest in what he had said; and the next morning, and several succeeding ones, saw him and Lord Lymington engaged in avocations that necessarily kept them much away from home. The time during their absence did not pass as pleasantly as usual to the Miss Wentworths. Mr. Stanley, who was constantly with them, but who seldom thought it worth while to bestow notice on anybody except Mrs. Tresham, became, from his positive manners and disre-

spectful style of speaking of Mr. Tresham, even in the presence of his wife, every hour more disagreeable; while his behaviour had now assumed so familiar an air towards Mrs. Tresham, who never appeared to notice what was passing around her, that Melicent longed for an opportunity of awakening her attention to its impropriety, and to the danger of Mr. Tresham's perceiving and taking offence at his impertinence to himself, and his increasing intimacy with his engaging and indolent wife.

CHAPTER XIX.

"A truce with your compliments and your gallantries!—where is the supper?"

ARABIAN STORY OF MARIA, THE GIRDLE MAKER.

"TRESHAM rates our patience highly!" exclaimed Stanley, as he stood before the fire, which the late stormy weather had rendered almost necessary. "This is the third time he and Lymington have kept us waiting for dinner in this unconscionable manner!"

"The rain falls so heavily," observed Melicent, "that it is not very surprising that Mr. Tresham should have been delayed in his return."

"Were I you, Mrs. Tresham, I would wait no longer. Tresham will probably return by the time we have sat down, unless he means to dine elsewhere, in which case he might have had the civility to let you know."

"Oh, I am in no hurry," said Mrs. Tresham; "it is not of the least consequence when we dine, you know; only I should not like to order it before Tresham comes home."

"Detained canvassing!" remarked Stanley, sarcastically, as he walked about the room. "I cannot imagine any person less qualified than our friend to conduct such a business.—Your brother's spirit and good humour will carry him through the thing, but it must be glorious to see the innumerable absurdities committed by the fastidious Tresham, in endeavouring to render himself popular with the *canaille!*"

A servant now entering, delivered to Mrs. Tresham a note from her husband, acquainting her with his having been induced by the state of the weather, and other circumstances, to remain

at ———, and that he was not to be expected at home until the following morning.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Stanley, as he heard the directions given in consequence, and the diminished party obeyed the desired summons to the dining room.

The evening passed but slowly, for Mr. Stanley was, in the opinion of the Miss Wentworths at least, an indifferent substitute for Tresham and Lymington, and Mrs. Tresham was more than ordinarily silent, and appeared visibly low-spirited and nervous. At an earlier hour than usual, she rose to withdraw for the night, and as the Miss Wentworths were about to separate from her to retire to their apartments, she whispered to Melicent,

"Pray have the goodness to come with me to my dressing-room;—I really do wish most particularly to consult you."

Not a little surprised at the hurried and agitated manner which accompanied these words, Melicent immediately complied, and followed

Mrs. Tresham to her apartment, the door of which she carefully closed, and then invited Melicent to place herself on the sofa. "Do sit here by the fire, where you will be comfortable; for I assure you I have a great deal to say, and I am afraid you will be sadly tired."

Assuring Mrs. Tresham of her interest in whatever she might wish to communicate, and that she need not apprehend her being fatigued, Melicent sat down as directed, and waited with considerable curiosity for the sequel. Mrs. Tresham's unwonted excitement appeared meanwhile to have subsided, and she looked greatly at a loss how to begin.

"It really does seem very foolish to trouble you about such a trifle," she at last said; "but then I am so very uncomfortable when I have anything to manage, and, after all I never do it right. Now you are so rational, and have so much more decision, that I know you will help me."

Melicent, still more surprised, entreated Mrs.

Tresham to tell her in what way it was possible for her to give her assistance; and, with renewed courage, her companion proceeded.

"Well then, my dear, I will tell you at once what it is that annoys me. Most provoking it certainly is—because Stanley used to be such a very great favourite of mine. Latterly, however, you have no idea how disagreeable he has been—especially since he last came to St. Austin's.—Some time ago, I remember, he used to be always talking great nonsense when we were alone, but it did not particularly strike me, and then he went on getting worse and worse—and now I cannot tell what I am to do to make him behave differently."

"It would surely not be very difficult to show Mr. Stanley, by your own manner, how much the alteration in his was displeasing to you," said Melicent, much astonished at her friend's incapacity. "I had no idea that he was not in as high favour with you as ever."

"But that is exactly what I have been trying

to do all the time—at least, ever since I thought at all about it," replied Mrs. Tresham, in a despairing accent; "and I suppose any one else could do it, only I have not the least conception how to begin—because if I remain silent, he is only the more ridiculous, and if I were to speak to him, I am sure I should not know what to say. What is worse than this, however," she continued, in the same tone of languid distress, "is, that I am so afraid Frank should notice it. I do not think that he ever liked Stanley, and I am frightened to death lest he should find out that he makes love to me."

"And are you not still more afraid of Mr. Tresham's discovering that his friend takes advantage of his hospitality to annoy you in this manner?" enquired Melicent.

"Oh, I should never recover the dread of Tresham's anger if he were to observe it—but then that is not at all likely, since he never does observe anything about me, and would only laugh at the very idea of such a thing as this."

"I cannot agree with you in thinking Mr. Tresham less likely than your brother to notice Mr. Stanley's very pointed attention," returned Melicent; "and, certainly, if he did remark it, there can be no doubt that his measures to check such boldness would not be of the most gentle or moderate character."

"If you really think Tresham is likely to remark it," exclaimed his now almost terrified wife, "then something must be done; but, what that is to be, I cannot imagine. Now it seems to me, but perhaps I may be wrong, that Stanley does not speak in a proper way about Tresham.—What do you think?"

"I am quite certain that he does not; and have been much surprised that you should allow Mr. Stanley to speak as he constantly does of Mr. Tresham in your presence. To-day, for instance, what could be more disrespectful to his hospitable friend and your husband, than his remarks on his unavoidable detention?"

"Oh, you are quite right, I know, and it was

very unpleasant for me to hear him—and very unlike a gentleman in him to talk so;—but then, Stanley has seen so many of Tresham's strange whims, that I do not wonder at his laughing at this new canvassing fancy, which will be over in a few days, and then Tresham will ridicule it himself. I cannot tell you half the different modes of amusement he has tried, every one more short-lived than the last. At one time he had a musical mania, which almost drove me distracted. Then he cared for nothing but the turf, and we had to go to races, and have those horrid betting men to dinner; only, fortunately, he lost immensely, and that cured him. Now the election is the reigning folly—to-morrow it may possibly be the working of a tin-mine. I wish he would settle down to one thing that might amuse him, and make him stay quietly at St. Austin's, where we might be so comfortable."

"If such is your desire, why do you not encourage him to take part in what is passing

around him? and why do you not endeavour to render the interest and excitement he now feels, more than a momentary caprice?"

"My dear, what can you mean?" interrupted her amazed auditor. "How is it possible that I can render dull country business pleasant, or make such a creature of impulse as Tresham like it after its novelty is past?"

"You can do a great deal, if you really wish it,—you can, at least, appear willing to interest yourself, and participate in his pursuits, as far as you are able; at all events, you need not always side with Mr. Stanley in the condemnation and ridicule of his exertions, by which I can assure you you have often unintentionally wounded the feelings of Mr. Tresham, at a time when you might have aided his resolution of adopting a more settled course of life, and rendering his stay in Cornwall more agreeable to himself, and beneficial to the neighbourhood."

Mrs. Tresham was silent for a few moments, and Melicent's arguments appeared not to be

without effect. "I am sure I did not in the least think that Tresham ever noticed what I said about the election," she at length resumed; "but you are perfectly right in all you say, and I only wish I were not so helpless, and could tell what to do about Stanley!"

"If you are really tired of inaction," said Melicent, "you have now a most laudable occasion for exertion. Speak to Mr. Stanley openly and decidedly, since the coldness of your manner is not sufficient to check his presumption;—tell him how highly you disapprove of his conduct, how displeasing it is to you;—and, were I in your place, I should certainly give him a very plain intimation, that his visit at St. Austin's had already been of sufficiently long duration."

"Heavens, Melicent! How should I ever say all this to Stanley?—I should be certain to make myself ridiculous in some way. Now, if you would be persuaded to speak to him for me, you would do it so nicely, that I should be quite sure of getting out of all my difficulties; while

I, on the contrary, should only make things worse, because it is so entirely out of my way."

"It certainly would be more out of mine," replied Melicent; "nor can I suppose you seriously to wish to assign to me so unbecoming a part. You must be aware how very improper, how utterly impossible would be my interference with Mr. Stanley on such a subject."

"Oh, it certainly would be very awkward for you, Melicent; but then, what is to become of me?—the man will talk so fast, and so well, that I shall never be able to get in a word."

"I cannot imagine that many will be required; of course, the slightest intimation from you will be enough to make Mr. Stanley leave a place where his presence is not desired; and all danger will then be over of a quarrel between him and Mr. Tresham, which, if he remains here, and persists in his late conduct, is, in my opinion, inevitable."

"I do not quite agree with you, Melicent; Tresham is so accustomed to consider me as a

kind of person to dawdle through existence, without feeling or creating emotion of any sort, that to be jealous would be the last thing in the world that would occur to him. It does sound so very ridiculous for me to be talking about love and jealousy! I wish Stanley had been wise enough to fall in love with you or Isabel, if he wanted something to do; and then you could have refused him quietly and properly, without being troublesome to any one, as I am now to you. However, you have convinced me of what is right to be done, and after we have got rid of this tiresome Stanley, I really will try to follow your advice. How I wish I were like you!"

Delighted with her evening's performance, Melicent bade her friend good night; resolving, if possible, not to allow her good intention to subside, and trusting that in time she might be aroused from her inertness of body and mind, to make her home more agreeable to her husband, and herself a happier, and more useful cha-

racter, than she could possibly be esteemed while the many amiable qualities of her disposition continued to be obscured by her habits of languid indolence.

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